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aaalac ag update



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AAALAC International Agricultural Update

Programs that use **agricultural animals** in science and education are eligible to participate in AAALAC International (AAALAC) accreditation. As part of the accreditation process, animal care and use programs are evaluated based on standards that include the AAALAC Rules of Accreditation, AAALAC Position and Guidance Statements, and applicable Reference Resources. For programs using Agricultural animals, ***The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)***, 2020 Edition*, is one of AAALAC's Reference Resources that would be of primary importance. AAALAC International takes the position that, in accredited programs, the housing and care for agricultural animals should meet the standards that prevail on a **high-quality, well-managed farm**. AAALAC accreditation exemplifies a comprehensive, institutionally supported program with a commitment to continuous improvement, humane and ethical animal care and use, and scientific validity. AAALAC's periodic third-party peer review assessment assures the institution, and the public, that they are remaining diligent, staying current with regulatory requirements, evolving industry standards, and maintaining a high level of excellence.

*At its September 2021 meeting, AAALAC International's Council on Accreditation adopted the 4th Edition of the Ag Guide **with five clarifications** noted on the first two pages of the document. https://www.aaalac.org/pub/?id=E900BDB6-CCCF-AB13-89B6-DA98A4B52218

Why Should Agricultural Animal Research Programs participate in AAALAC Accreditation?

- **Demonstrates** an institution's commitment to the highest quality animal care and oversight.
- Improves opportunities for inter- and intra-institutional **collaborations** at national and international levels that **may result** in sponsored **research funding** and enhanced **networking**.
- Leverages institutional support for **facility upgrades** and continuing improvements.
- Gives **credibility** to the institution's program among governmental agencies, for example: US federal agencies (the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, or the Department of Defense and sponsors such as: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) or The Agricultural Research Service (ARS).
- Stimulates continuous **program self-assessment**, benchmarking and improvement.

What programs does AAALAC accredit?

AAALAC International accredits programs using any vertebrate animal or cephalopods in science and education. As such, all animals used for science and education at accreditation eligible institutions are to be included and evaluated.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

"Michigan State University's (MSU) agricultural research extends to every community within the State of Michigan, playing a vital role in our land grant mission. AAALAC accreditation ensures agricultural researchers that we uphold gold-standard level care to support their work. Maintaining these rigorous standards is essential to our entire animal program's mission. In addition, MSU's collaborations with local and national industry organizations allow for this level of care to be extended into the agricultural sector and promote the advancement of agricultural practices."

—Danielle Ferguson, Director and Attending Veterinarian, MSU

Regardless of the species, the expectation is that all program animals receive appropriate care and that pain and distress are minimized.

What Standards does AAALAC International use to evaluate Agricultural Research programs?

In addition to the *standards mentioned above* other specialty publications are used for supplemental information about procedures or techniques related to the care and use of research and teaching animals can be found in the Reference Resources. Reference Resources are Council on Accreditation (COA) reviewed and adopted publications and may be used by AAALAC International's Council for guidance during site visits. AAALAC Position Statements and Guidance Statements, lend clarifications and enhance understanding on expectations on particular topics and are applied where applicable.





THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

"AAALAC International accreditation has significantly enhanced our animal care and use program, ensuring we meet the highest standards of animal welfare and scientific integrity. It not only demonstrates our commitment to research excellence but also our commitment to continuous improvement in our animal care practices as well as employee health and safety programs. Our AAALAC accredited program provides assurance to stakeholder and the public that we are dedicated to the humane use of animals in research."

—Pasha Lyvers-Peffer, PHD, Chair and Professor in the Department of Animal Sciences
The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Who performs the Accreditation Site Visit?

The site visit team is composed of an AAALAC Council on Accreditation (COA) member and as many ad hoc Consultants/Specialists as needed depending upon the institution's size and research program complexity. To ensure a thorough peer-review, the team members are selected based on the program's animal species and research/teaching activities. As such, for agricultural programs, the site visit team would include **experts in agricultural/production science** and/or experienced farm managers.

How much does accreditation cost?

Organizations seeking and maintaining accreditation are asked to pay a one-time application fee and subsequent annual fees. Both fees are based on a sliding scale that generally correlates with the size of an institution's animal facility. The accreditation fees of agricultural programs having extensive pasture lands are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. (https://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-standards/faqs/#G2)

AAALAC International's Position Statement

Selecting the Appropriate Standard(s) for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals.

AAALAC International recognizes that the biomedical or agricultural research, testing or teaching objectives as well as the health and welfare of the animals will dictate when application of the recommendations of the Ag Guide, ILAR Guide, or European Convention-ETS 123 or other Reference Resources is most appropriate. For animals in an agricultural setting, AAALAC International takes the position that, in accredited programs, the housing and care for farm animals should meet the standards that prevail on a high-quality, well-managed farm. The collective professional judgment of the responsible oversight body (i.e., IACUC, Ethics Committee), principal investigator and veterinarian should determine which standard(s) applies best with regard to the care and welfare of agricultural animals, based on a performance approach* in the context of the requirements of the study and the species used.** The rationale for making this determination should be documented.

*NRC Guide, pp. 6-7, Engineering, **Performance**, and Practice Standards
**For institutions that also hold a U.S. Public Health Service Assurance, see additional information regarding this topic at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/faqs.htm#g7



Dispelling Common Myths and Misperceptions

Myth: AAALAC International is a regulatory agency.

Fact: AAALAC International is a private, nonprofit organization. The accreditation process is a peer review performance-based process at the invitation of an institution.

Myth: AAALAC International establishes policies and regulations.

Fact: AAALAC International evaluates animal care and use programs based on recommendations in their Three Primary Standards, applicable legislation and other approved references.

Myth: In the U.S., AAALAC International evaluates animal care and use programs that only use animals regulated under the Animal Welfare Act.

Fact: AAALAC International accreditation covers all animals used or to be used in research, teaching or testing at accredited programs.

*Rules of Accreditation: All vertebrate animals and cephalopods used in science and education.

Myth: AAALAC International is part of the IACUC or comparable Oversight Body.

Fact: The acronyms associated with animal research can be confusing, but it is important to know that **AAALAC is not linked to the IACUC** (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) or any other comparable Oversight Body (OB) such as an Ethics Committee or Animal Welfare Body. The IACUC/OB is charged with oversight of the institution's animal care and use program. AAALAC evaluates the performance of the IACUC/OB during a site visit to ensure that it is performing well.

Myth: AAALAC imposes biomedical standards on our agricultural animal research programs.

Fact: AAALAC does not hold agricultural facilities to the same criteria used to evaluate biomedical research facilities and laboratories. AAALAC expects that agricultural animal research programs meet the standards for housing and care that prevail on a **high quality, well-managed farm**. *One of AAALAC's Reference Resources is the Ag Guide.*



How does AAALAC ensure confidentiality?

The entire accreditation process is confidential. The accreditation evaluation and its results, even if deficiencies are found, are kept between the organization seeking accreditation and AAALAC International. All AAALAC representatives sign a confidentiality and secrecy agreement and agree to safeguard and treat materials as privileged. AAALAC also complies with the European GDPR.

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

"The value of including our agriculture animal program in AAALAC accreditation is it shows our commitment to consistency in IACUC oversight and reviews, our support of the 3R's, and our dedication to excellence in animal welfare for all species and scopes of research at the University. Accreditation of ag programs also provides assurances to collaborators and sponsors that our program meets or exceeds established standards, helping to attract top research talent and funding."

— Debra Thurley, Associate Vice President for Research and Institutional Official, The Pennsylvania State University

Approximately 80 academic and non-academic institutions include agricultural animals as part their accreditation world-wide. Specifically in the US, of 71 Land Grant Colleges, 25 (35%) include their entire agricultural animal care programs as part of their accreditation.



UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO HIGHLIGHTED IN THE NEWS:

"At the University of Nevada, we are committed to conducting research that is both innovative and ethically responsible," said Mridul Gautam, vice president for research and innovation. "This reaccreditation underscores the university's dedication to maintaining the highest standards in animal care while advancing scientific discovery."

"Our continued AAALAC accreditation is a testament to the fantastic support team in Animal Resources and our dedicated faculty in biomedical, agricultural and life/natural sciences who work and adhere to the utmost rigor in animal research and discovery," said Brad Ferguson, associate professor and graduate program director in the Department of Nutrition and current chair of the IACUC."

— www.kolotv.com/2026/03/31/unr-maintains-prestigious-accreditation-excellence-animal-care/