• Why should agricultural animal research programs participate in the AAALAC accreditation program?

• What species does AAALAC accredit?

• What standards does AAALAC use?


• New article on High-Containment Agricultural Animal Research

• AAALAC’s Position Statement on “Selecting the Appropriate Standard(s) for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals”

• Site visits, cost, dispelling common myths and misperceptions, and more...

• List of accredited Land Grant Institutions

“This accreditation opens the door to new collaborations with other organizations and universities, more funding and a higher quality of research for various colleges at UI, including the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the College of Natural Resources.”

—University of Idaho Argonaut, Anteia McCollum
AAALAC International Agricultural Update

Programs that use **agricultural animals** in research, teaching or testing are welcomed into the AAALAC accreditation program. The *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)*, American Dairy Science Association®, the American Society of Animal Science, and the Poultry Science Association 2020, is one of AAALAC’s Three Primary Standards along with the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* [NRC 2011] and European Convention—ETS 123. The *Ag Guide* is used by AAALAC site visit teams to evaluate agricultural programs. 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 International accreditation exemplifies a comprehensive, institutionally supported program with a commitment to continuous improvement, humane and ethical animal care, and scientific validity. AAALAC’s periodic third-party peer assessment assures institutions, and the public, that their programs are remaining diligent, staying current with evolving industry standards, and maintaining a high level of excellence.

**Council Adopts 4th Edition of the Ag Guide**


**What species does AAALAC accredit?**

All animals used or to be used in research, teaching or testing at accreditation-eligible institutions are to be included and evaluated. This includes traditional laboratory animals, **farm animals**, wildlife, and aquatic animals. Nontraditional animals, inclusive of invertebrate species, are also included where they are relevant to the program’s mission.

Regardless of the species, the expectation is that all program animals are appropriately cared for and that pain and distress are minimized.

**Why participate in accreditation?**

- Improves opportunities for inter- and intra-institutional **collaborations** that may result in sponsored **research funding** and enhanced **networking**.
- Leverages institutional support for **facility upgrades** and continuing improvements.
- Adds **credibility** to the institution’s program among federal agencies, e.g., National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, the Department of Defense, and sponsors such as, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) or the Agricultural Research Service (ARS).
- Stimulates **program self-assessment**, benchmarking, and improvement.
- **Assures the public** of the institution’s commitment to the highest quality animal care and oversight.
What Standards does AAALAC International use to evaluate Agricultural Research programs?

In addition to the Three Primary Standards (mentioned earlier and shown at right), other specialty publications are used for supplemental information about procedures or techniques related to the care and use of animals in science. These publications have been formally reviewed and adopted by AAALAC International’s Council on Accreditation as guidance for accredited programs as well as the AAALAC International representatives during the site visit. These are the current Reference Resources specific to, or containing, Agricultural Animal program information:

**Species Specific:**
- FELASA recommendations for the health monitoring of experimental units of calves, sheep and goats
- FELASA recommendations for the health monitoring of breeding colonies and experimental units of cats, dogs and pigs
- AAALAC FAQ: Are agricultural animal programs eligible?

**General:**
- ACLAM Position Statement on Adequate Veterinary Care, 2016

**Biosafety:**
- Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories (BMBL), 2020 edition

**Occupational Health and Safety:**
- Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals, 1997

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**High-Containment Agriculture Animal Research: An AAALAC International Perspective**

Institutions that conduct high-containment agricultural research involving domestic livestock represent a specialized category of programs that are accredited by AAALAC. This article published in *ILAR Journal* (19 April 2021) discusses issues to inform institutions of potential concerns that should be reviewed and assessed during internal preparations for accreditation visits by AAALAC site visit teams.

**The full article is available online:** [https://academic.oup.com/ilarjournal/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ilar/ilab006/6237481?login=true](https://academic.oup.com/ilarjournal/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ilar/ilab006/6237481?login=true)
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, NRC Guide, or ETS 123 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

Who performs the Accreditation Site Visit?

The site visit team is composed of at least one member of AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation (COA) or Council Emeritus member and as many ad hoc Consultants/Specialists as needed, depending on 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 of these fees are based on a sliding scale that generally correlates with the size of an institution’s animal space. Farm barns and sheds (not used for biomedical studies) are calculated according to the numbers of buildings and the size of the program, generally not at actual square footage. Acreage may contribute to increasing the calculated size but is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
Dispelling Common Myths and Misperceptions

**Myth:** AAALAC International is a regulatory agency.

**Fact:** AAALAC International is a private, nonprofit organization.

**Myth:** AAALAC International establishes policies and regulations.

**Fact:** AAALAC International evaluates animal care and use programs based on recommendations in the Three Primary Standards, applicable legislation and other approved science-based 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: Definition/Animals - This includes traditional laboratory animals, **farm animals**, wildlife, and aquatic animals. Nontraditional animals, inclusive of invertebrate species, are also included where they are relevant to the program’s mission.

**Myth:** AAALAC International is part of the IACUC.

**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). The IACUC is charged with oversight of the institution’s animal care and use program. As part of the site visit, AAALAC evaluates the performance of the IACUC 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 Primary Standards is the Ag Guide.

How does AAALAC ensure confidentiality?

The entire accreditation process is confidential. As a private organization, AAALAC is not subject to FOIA or state open records requests. Therefore, AAALAC will maintain confidentiality of the accreditation evaluation and its results, even if deficiencies are found. All AAALAC representatives sign a confidentiality and secrecy agreement and agree to safeguard and treat materials as privileged.
“I think accreditation is a testament to our people and facilities; we received this accreditation without any findings that would have indicated we needed to change or improve our practices. We take animal welfare seriously and work to continue to educate not only our employees, but our students about the importance of animal care.”

—John Foltz, Chair, Department of Animal Sciences, The Ohio State University

Accredited Land Grant Institutions

There are 71 eligible land-grant institutions (LGIs) in the United States, and 44 of those are participating in the AAALAC accreditation program.

Auburn University*
Clemson University*
Colorado State University
Cornell University*
Florida A&M University
Iowa State University
Kansas State University
Louisiana State University*
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Michigan State University*
Mississippi State University
Montana State University
North Carolina State University
Oklahoma State University
Oregon State University *
Purdue University*
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey*
Texas A&M University
The Ohio State University*
The Pennsylvania State University*
The University of Arizona*
The University of Georgia

The University of Tennessee*
University of California-Davis*
University of California-Riverside*
University of Connecticut-Storrs*
University of Florida
University of Idaho*
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*
University of Kentucky
University of Maine System, Orono
University of Maryland*
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri
University of Nebraska
University of Nebraska - Lincoln*
University of Nevada, Reno*
University of Puerto Rico
University of Vermont
University of Wisconsin-Madison*
Utah State University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Washington State University*
West Virginia University

*Includes Ag Program

Total Eligible Land Grant Institutions (LGIs) = 71
Percent LGI’s accredited = 44/71 or 62%
Total Number of LGI’s where Ag program is accredited = 22 (31%), or 50% of accredited LGI’s