

AAALAC International Fellowship – Why you should apply!

Carol Fox - 2009 Recipient Report



My wonderful Globe!

I have just been reviewing the reports of the AAALAC Fellows in previous IAT bulletins and I find myself in a bit of a quandary regarding what to write. The previous Fellows have done such an excellent job, what more can I add!

Therefore I decided to take a different approach, and try to encourage other UK recipients to apply and to explain why I found it such a rewarding experience.

If you visit www.aaalac.org and follow the link from the “about AAALAC” menu, you will find the pages for the award. Below is a section from those pages

The AAALAC International Technician Fellowship Award

This award is presented by AAALAC International through a grant by Priority One Services, Inc. (POS) and in cooperation with the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT), the Medical Research Council (MRC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The AAALAC International Technician Fellowship recognizes two outstanding technicians each year--one IAT Registered (RAnTech) technologist and one AALAS Registered (RALAT, RLAT, RLATG, or CMAR) technician--who have made (or have the potential to make) significant contributions to the field of laboratory animal care and use. The award is intended to promote and reward the efforts of technicians who have demonstrated a commitment to a career in laboratory animal science and have shown a strong interest in attaining additional education and training to become more proficient in their vocation. The candidates nominated for this prestigious award must be either AALAS (RALAT, RLAT, RLATG, or CMAR) Registered or IAT Registered (RAnTech at Membership or Fellowship level).

In the fall, the IAT Registered (RAnTech) recipient will participate in a week-long educational internship in an animal care and use program within a U.S. institution. This will be followed by attendance at the National AALAS meeting. Upon completion of the fellowship, the recipient will be expected to write a paper about the experience for AAALAC International Connection, AAALAC's main publication. (The report is usually published in the bulletin too)

The Fellowship is valued at more than \$3,000.

I received a week-long guest visit to a prestigious biomedical research facility in the U.S., followed by attendance at the National AALAS meeting in Denver (all registration, travel and

lodging expenses were included, along with a daily allowance for meals and out-of-pocket expenses). AALAS is in Atlanta in 2010.

How I got here – My history!

In 2008 I attended AALAS representing the Institute of Animal Technology, manning the institute stand each day within the vast exhibition hall.

I had an invite to the International luncheon hosted by AAALAC and as I sat in the audience and watched the 2008 recipient (Pete Willan) receive the award I listened to his recent experiences whilst at the NIH and as a delegate at AALAS and I thought what a wonderful experience he had. I had no idea a year later I would be the 2009 recipient.

There are several ways you can apply. Simply write a brief letter nominating yourself, or as happened to me, someone can nominate you and they write the letter on your behalf.

I shall never forget the feeling of having someone come up to me and say, “Carol we think you are a great candidate for this award.” It was quite an emotional moment for me!

After my sponsor and I reviewed the criteria, it was clear that I met the requirements. I was a current member of the UK Institute of Animal Technology, I had received my Fellowship in 1986 and I was also an IAT Registered Animal Technologist (RAnTech). That part was easy; it was now a case of looking back at over 30 plus years of experience to find the highlights for my 500 word statement!

Be sure to address these points in your application ...

- *What have you done to promote animal welfare and refinement within your workplace?*
- *What have you done to promote animal welfare and refinement outside of your workplace?*
- *How have you shared your knowledge of laboratory animal care with others?*
- *If you are selected, how will this award benefit your career and your associates?*
- *How will you translate this experience back to your workplace and your local association?*
- *Does your package include evidence of leadership or leadership potential and participation with posters, presentations and publications?*
- *Have you participated in overseas meetings in the past?*

We took each point from the “tips section” and made sure all points were included within the statement. We also included my current CV and I was honoured to have two esteemed colleagues write letters of support for me.

The great thing about putting this package together is that it gave me an opportunity to reflect back over my career, the people who have helped me along the way, encouraged me, and just generally reflect on how much animal technology has advanced over the years.

It is a great opportunity to acknowledge those who have made a difference for you.

My package was sent off in time for the June deadline and then we waited. I then received an email followed by a formal letter informing me I had been nominated, and so my adventure began.

I was lucky enough to have some spare holiday so I managed to persuade my husband to travel to Washington early and we spent six days exploring before he returned to London and I began my week at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda.



Washington Monument



Arlington Cemetery

I was met by two of the NIH team and taken to the site (with my passport for security purposes!). Once through the security procedures I was given an overview of the facility and the campus in general. I then went on a tour of the main building and was given an overview of US legislation before having a great pot luck lunch.



NIH Facility

The first thing that hit me was caging sizes. I knew they would be smaller than the UK regulations so I was interested to see what the housing conditions were like. All of the caging had some form of enrichment which was great to see.

The legislation was interesting. We have a Certificate Holder, but in the US they have somebody called an Institutional Official. One of the main differences is that in the UK the Certificate holder **personally** assumes overall responsibility to the Home Office for compliance, where the IO is authorised on **behalf of the research facility**.

The UK has an **Ethical Review Process (ERP)** whilst the US has an Institutional **Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)**. In the UK the ERP provides independent ethical advice to the Certificate Holder with regard to Project Licences and standards for animal care and welfare and support to the named people. The IACUC provides regulatory oversight of the animal care and use program, including semi-annual inspections of the animal facility and periodic review of all protocols to ensure that animals are used in a manner that is prudent, scientifically justified and technically sound.. The IACUC also develops policies and provides reports to the IO.

In many cases, research proposals in the US are funded through government agencies, the largest which is represented by the National Institutes of Health. Scientists submit their research proposals to the various funding agencies that direct the proposals to peer review

committees comprised of esteemed scientists and experts from the US in the research areas pertinent to the proposals.

The review process I am told is "very rigorous and highly competitive" and only a small percentage (approximately 10%) of those deemed acceptable and funding-worthy receive a rating high enough to warrant the allocation of available funds. I am now wondering how this would compare for grants in the UK!

Apparently researchers submit and resubmit their proposals with improvements, only to receive the message that the proposal is "approved but not funded." Most of the highly competitive research institutions in the US have animal programs that are accredited by AAALAC International, and those that are not accredited provide the government agencies with an annual assurance document that describes the institution's provisions for and history of compliance with US animal welfare laws.

Once a research proposal has completed the extensive external approval system and the internal IACUC review process successfully, it must then comply with the US animal welfare regulations and any policy enhancements set forth by the local IACUC to protect animal subjects.

The UK has a **Named Veterinary Surgeon**. In the US the equivalent is the **Attending Veterinarian**, although the roles are not identical.

The UK also has a Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer whose responsibilities include:-

Aware of standards of husbandry and welfare set out in the Code of Practice. Ensuring suitable records are maintained of the health of the animals as determined by the Named Veterinary Surgeon. Maintaining suitable records of environmental conditions and all records of where animals are bought, bred, supplied, issued, used and killed. Understand which areas of the establishment are listed on the Certificate of Designation and the purpose they are designed. All animals are seen and checked at least once daily by a competent person. Familiar with Project Licences in use, including severity limits and humane end points. How to contact relevant people - all project licence holders NVS and Certificate Holder and aware of appropriate methods of Schedule 1 as far as I can tell there is no equivalent in the US.

There are of course further differences I have just tried to highlight a few.

If you are interested in the rest of my program please read Gary Childs or Pete Willan's reports as the schedule was more or less the same.

Visit <http://www.aaalac.org/about/fellows.cfm>

I was very impressed with the breeding programs that are being undertaken and the care that these animals are being given. The staff have great training and education and it was a privilege to be part of it.

The science I witnessed that week demonstrates how important the use of animals in research is, and how animal technologists, caretakers, vet techs and support staff support this process.

I'd like to take this opportunity to give a very big thank you to the team at NIH. Although my time was short, the learning was excellent. The NIH experience has shown me how well a partnership can work between a Government institution and a Contract organisation. Having a contractor play such a leading role in facility operation was interesting and something we are seeing more of in the UK.

My personal experience with non-human primates is very limited. The care of the animals was excellent. I saw compassion, vast experience and dedication and there was pride in their work in all of the facilities I visited. Mental health and eye research is a challenge, and one they are meeting with excellence.

It was a pleasure to meet Chris Newcomer and his team at the AAALAC International offices. The presentation I was given explained so much of what AAALAC International can offer and the importance accreditation plays within the facilities as it sets a standard that this industry can and should meet.



Behind the scenes - Baltimore Aquarium



AAALAC Offices

Finally a few words about the AALAS conference I could not believe just how big the meeting is, posters alone were over 300. This meeting is over 15 times larger than the UK IAT congress. The papers were excellent quality and I would recommend the experience to everyone.



Posters



Denver Convention Centre

I have people come up to me and say they are not experienced enough to apply for the Fellowship. It is not about experience, it is about what you are going to get out of the experience and give back to others.

What are you waiting for, apply today!

Mail, fax, or e-mail your application materials to:

AAALAC International
c/o The International Technician Fellowship Selection Committee
5283 Corporate Drive, Suite 203
Frederick, MD 21703
FAX: +301.696.9627
EMAIL: accredit@aaalac.org

<http://www.aaalac.org/about/fellowship.cfm>

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