

AAALAC POSITION STATEMENTS

The Attending Veterinarian, Veterinary Team, and Provision of Veterinary Care

The animal care and use program is the collaborative responsibility of the Institutional Official, the Attending Veterinarian, and the IACUC or comparable Oversight Body (OB). The Attending Veterinarian or other equivalent veterinary position, hereafter abbreviated as AV, is responsible for the welfare and clinical care of animals used in research, testing, teaching, and production.

For the purposes of this Position Statement, the term “AV and/or designee(s)” is used below to recognize that responsibilities are often carried out by a team of individuals, and not solely the AV; however, AAALAC considers the AV to be the individual with primary oversight and authority.

This responsibility extends to monitoring and promoting animal welfare during all phases of the animal’s life. It is expected that the program of veterinary care will uphold high standards of care and ethics. Moreover, the AV must have sufficient authority to treat an animal and institute appropriate measures to relieve pain or distress, including euthanasia. In fulfilling these duties in a research environment, the AV should interact collaboratively with the research team (e.g., the Principal Investigator or Study Director) when making critical decisions regarding animal health and welfare. The AV must have adequate resources to manage the overall program of veterinary care. AAALAC acknowledges that other qualified individuals may assume some of the roles and responsibilities of the AV, under the oversight of the AV. The AV may delegate responsibilities to other individuals, including other veterinarians, who are qualified to perform those duties.

Important aspects of the role of the veterinarian(s) and the program of veterinary care typically include the following:

- Veterinarians providing clinical and/or program oversight and support must have appropriate experience and ongoing professional development in veterinary medicine, and relevant knowledge necessary to evaluate the health and welfare of the species used, in the context of the animal use being carried out by the institution. The AV shall have substantial knowledge and skills in the science of basic veterinary activities, including anatomy and physiology of healthy animals, housing and husbandry, nature of disease conditions (including zoonotic diseases) and their prevention/surveillance, diagnosis and resolution, behavioral management, anesthesia and surgery, and protection of animal welfare. Demonstration of proficiency through advanced training in comparative medicine or through instruction in animal health, husbandry, behavior, and welfare regulations beyond the completion of traditional veterinary school curricula, with mentored guidance from an experienced specialist is also desirable. In addition to the species-appropriate expertise listed, a competent veterinarian should be knowledgeable in local and national regulations, ethical guidelines, the 3Rs, animal models, and design of scientific procedures and research projects. The AV and veterinary staff should remain knowledgeable about the latest practices and procedures to ensure that high quality care is provided to animals.
- Any veterinarian providing clinical care and program oversight must be legally qualified to perform their designated duties. The AV and any designees must have access to all sites and all animal housing, care, use, and procedure areas, as well as access to animal use protocols and medical records.

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- There must be timely provision of veterinary medical care and emergency veterinary care, including after normal work hours, on weekends, and holidays. The AV may designate another individual with assigned responsibility to provide care under their supervision. However, there should be careful consideration of who is qualified to provide emergency veterinary care and their availability to be on site when needed for an urgent care situation. The veterinarian on-call must have appropriately designated authority and be sufficiently knowledgeable about the animal program to effectively provide veterinary care.
- Provision of veterinary care should be documented in medical records.
- The AV and designee(s) must have oversight of additional aspects of the veterinary care program, such as preventative medicine and health surveillance, medical treatment, establishment of sedation, anesthetic and analgesic guidelines, handling, immobilization, euthanasia, and reuse of animals, and should have oversight of other related aspects such as housing, husbandry, and rehoming.
- The AV and designee(s) must provide guidance to surgery programs and ensure adequate peri-operative (pre-procedural, surgical, and post-procedural) care.
- If there is no full-time AV on-site, there must be a designated, qualified, and adequately trained person who is responsible for daily animal care and use and facility management, who must communicate animal health issues promptly to the AV.

In addition, the AV or designee(s) has further responsibilities related to their role in the program and on the IACUC/OB. For example:

- The AV needs to interact with a variety of professionals within and outside the establishment/institute. Clear communication lines should be established between the AV and the IO or other senior administrative responsible person(s) with ultimate authority overseeing the care and welfare of all animals. The AV needs to have sufficient awareness and understanding of the local practices to be able to contribute to the IACUC/OB.
- The veterinarian(s) must have input in protocol review for all animal procedures, prevention/alleviation of pain or distress, the development of study removal criteria, and responsible conduct of research activities.
- The veterinarian(s) and/or individuals providing care to animals should understand the potential for adverse clinical complications that may arise from experimental procedures.
- The veterinarian(s) should have understanding and proficiency in performing acceptable methods of euthanasia for all species in the animal care and use program.
- The veterinarian(s) should be involved in the design and management of the facility and husbandry procedures, including the selection of personnel.

Supporting Documents:

1. *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th ed., National Research Council. 2011.
2. ACLAM Position Statement on Adequate Veterinary Care. updated June 2022.
3. ESLAV/ECLAM/LAVA/EVERI recommendations for the Roles and Responsibilities & Training of the Lab Animal Veterinarian and the designated veterinarian under Directive 2010/63/EU. *Lab Anim.* 49(2), 2015.
4. Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine (CALAM)/ACMAL Standards of Veterinary Care. Updated April 2020.
5. *Guidelines on the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*, 2nd ed., National Advisory Committee for Laboratory Animal Research (NACLAR), Singapore. 2022.
6. Noonan D. and Williams V. "Chapter 12 Laboratory Animal Regulations and Recommendations: Australia and New Zealand" *Laboratory Animals Regulations and Recommendations for the Care and Use of Animals in Research* 2nd ed. (J. Guillén Ed.) Academic Press. 2018.
7. Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. 8th Edition, 2013 (updated 2021)
8. New Zealand Good Practice Guide for the use of animals in research, testing and teaching. Updated January 2022.