Preparing for the semiannual review

Help your team understand its purpose and get the most out of the process

When AAALAC International evaluators find deficiencies in laboratory animal programs, they most commonly fall under the category of “institutional policies” (see Chapter 1 of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide), NRC 1996). This category encompasses a wide range of topics—from protocol review procedures to broader issues such as program oversight and the effectiveness of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

The “semiannual review,” a process that’s required by regulations within the United States, is a responsibility that institutions continue to struggle with, and it continues to be cited as one of the top deficiencies identified by members of AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation. Connection covered this topic in a 2002 article, “Avoiding the pitfalls of an inadequate semiannual review,” but it’s one worthy of revisiting. This article will take a fresh look at helping staff understand the process, explain what AAALAC expects, and discuss how you can use the semiannual review as a tool for continuous quality improvement.

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Still a struggle

Whether it’s because the purpose and process are misunderstood, or the fact that some IACUCs are understaffed and overworked, semiannual inspections remain a major source of deficiencies cited by AAALAC International.

“I believe a lot of IACUC members see their primary responsibility as reviewing protocols. They may be so overloaded that trying to tackle anything else is perceived as an extra job that gets in the way of reviewing and approving protocols,” says David DeLong, D.V.M., M.S., Chief of the Veterinary Medical Unit at the Veteran Affairs Medical Center in St. Paul, MN, and former officer of AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation.

But focusing solely on protocol review overlooks the larger picture.

“Semiannual inspections, evaluations and reports are a key part of the IACUC’s responsibility,” says Alan C. Rosenquist, Ph.D., Professor of Neuroscience and Chair of the IACUC at the University of Pennsylvania and former member of AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation. “The purpose is to assure your Institutional Official that all animal care and use at your institution complies with all applicable regulations and guidelines.”

Complicating matters are growing expectations about what the semiannual review should accomplish.

“Expectations for the semiannual review have broadened over time which makes the process even more intimidating,” DeLong says. “Years ago, it was just an inspection of the animal facilities, but now it includes a review of the entire animal care and use program, including an inspection of research laboratories. What’s more, there’s a growing expectation that the semiannual review process should help ensure that procedures are conducted as described in the approved protocols.”

Understand that it includes a facility inspection, a review of animal care and use activities, and a “program” review

Part of the reason institutions may still be struggling with the semiannual review is that the USDA and PHS Policy regulations require it, but they fail to define what a “program” is.

AAALAC defines a “program” as encompassing all aspects of an institution’s involvement with and activities related to: institutional policies for animal care and use; animal environment, housing and management; veterinary medical care; and all animal facilities. These elements correspond with the main sections outlined in the Guide—the main reference used by AAALAC site visitors to assess institutions.

“When you don’t understand what a program is, it’s hard to know how to begin evaluating it,” says Molly Greene, an IACUC advisor based in East Lansing, Michigan, and ad hoc Consultant for AAALAC International.

Greene, who helped develop the popular “IACUC 101” workshop series offered around the country, notes that for many institutions, inspecting the facilities is a big job that takes a lot of time. When the inspection is done it’s easy to feel that the semiannual review requirement has been met. “People forget or may not be fully aware of the second component,” Greene says.

Current regulations and the Guide don’t provide specifics on how to conduct the review. But there are a few key things to keep in mind: it must include a review of the animal care and use program and activities, and an inspection of all facilities where animals are housed and used. For programs that have USDA covered species or a PHS assurance, the resulting written report must differentiate between “significant” and “minor” deficiencies and include a plan and timetable for correcting them. The IACUC must review the final report and it must be signed by a majority of members. The report must then be sent to the Institutional Official and kept on file for at least

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The program review: find the right review techniques for your institution

As noted earlier, the program review element of the semiannual must include an examination of your entire animal care and use program, encompassing the key areas addressed in the first three chapters of the Guide. This includes institutional policies on monitoring animal care and use; personnel training; occupational health and safety; animal environment, housing and management; and all aspects of veterinary medical care such as preventive medicine, surgery, analgesia and anesthesia.

There are many ways to accomplish the program review and it's important to find the right system for your institution. While it's tempting to opt for the simplest and fastest way, make sure that whatever methods you use meet the intent of this evaluation—making sure that your institution is complying with all applicable regulations, policies and guidelines.

Since the semiannual review is required and takes up valuable time and resources, you might want to go beyond the intent and consider ways of getting more out of the review than just checking off requirements. For example, the semiannual review can also be used as a mechanism for tracking trends and improvements, as well as monitoring quality.

“It’s important to remember that the regulations represent minimum standards,” Greene says. “Whenever possible, we should strive to go beyond them. The semiannual review can be used to gauge where you are.”

There are a variety of tools and techniques you can use to review your program. Many institutions use the checklist created by the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) which is available online at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/sampledoc/chek1a.htm. Others have developed their own checklists and questionnaires, while some use their AAALAC International Program Description as the basis for the review.

“The checklist on the OLAW web site is excellent. But if you use it every single time, it encourages complacency,” Greene says. “It doesn’t encourage you to look at your program creatively or ask deeper questions beyond just checking a box.”

Greene says if you’re using a checklist as the basis for conducting the semiannual review, try using it as a launching pad for an open discussion among IACUC members. So instead of just checking a box that confirms ‘yes, our IACUC has at least five members,’ that line can be used as an opening to discuss if the five members you have represent the research strengths of the institution, if more members are needed, or what additional training might be helpful to existing committee members.

“Try to do the review differently every six months,” Greene says. “It’s not effective to do the same thing over and over.”

DeLong concurs. “Asking questions of the IACUC is a much better way to get people thinking about things in a deeper and broader way.”

Rosenquist also agrees. “The checklist is an excellent adjunct, but used alone it makes it very easy to just go through it quickly without asking questions.” Rosenquist suggests also looking at USDA inspection reports (especially if they noted any deficiencies), SOPs, and IACUC meeting minutes to get a feel for areas that should be closely examined during the review. Asking key staff members to make presentations to the IACUC is another good method of collecting information.

Some institutions use their AAALAC International Program Description as the basis for their semiannual review. This is a good way to ensure that the entire program is reviewed and to determine if procedures and practices have changed at the institution since the previous AAALAC site visit. But if the Program Description is used, it’s important to also ask what’s not working or what might work better—to use the Program Description in a way that facilitates critical thinking as well as an in-depth description of the current animal care and use program.

The best approach may be using a combination of tools, such as your AAALAC International Program Description, the OLAW Checklist, previous USDA reports or a custom-designed questionnaire, and to vary the tools used each time to avoid complacency. The key is to prompt fresh, critical thinking that makes sure the right questions get asked—and answered.

Ensure a thorough facility inspection

You must visit facilities where animal surgery is conducted, along with locations where animals are held for a longer term. This means any facility where animals covered under the Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs) are held for more than 12 hours, and any facility where animals covered under your Public Health Service (PHS) Animal Welfare Assurance Statement are held for more than 24 hours.

According to OLAW, other areas where there are more routine activities, such as weighing or continued next page ...
dosing, can be evaluated differently—perhaps through a random sample of evaluations of those areas. “It may be helpful and appropriate to have compliance people inspect routine activity areas, and have the IACUC members focus on the more complex areas” Rosenquist says.

You must also make sure you inspect all central facilities and all offsite facilities where your institution owns animals. (For more information on what is considered an offsite facility, see the Spring 2003 issue of Connection and the article “Who’s responsible for offsite animals” at www.aaalac.org/publications/newsletter.cfm.)

For the facility inspection, it is acceptable to divide up the task. In fact, the Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs) state that only two IACUC members need to participate in the facility inspection (AWRs apply when species covered by the Act are used—animals other than rats, mice and birds bred for research). Both the AWRs and PHS Policy allow the use of non-IACUC member consultants to assist in the inspection process and state that the IACUC may “determine the best means of conducting an evaluation of the institution’s programs and facilities. This applies to both facility inspections and program reviews.” This is why some large universities have moved toward using compliance officers to help out with the inspection. (When inspecting USDA-covered species, be sure to follow all USDA requirements.)

“Often compliance people will act as a liaison between the labs and the IACUC. The IACUC is ultimately responsible for the final report that goes to the Institutional Official, but the committee can use professional staff to help alleviate some of the burden on the IACUC,” DeLong says.

Others are creating facility subcommittees on their IACUCs that are responsible for the inspections.

“When you have too many people inspecting one area it can slow the process down,” DeLong says. “It’s better to have a couple of well-trained people who know what they’re looking for.”

It’s critical to have the right people reviewing the right areas. And to avoid conflict of interest, it’s best to make sure committee members are not reviewing their own laboratories or facility areas.

“The bottom line is that IACUCs are responsible for what goes on in investigators’ laboratories,” Rosenquist says. Whatever system is in place for inspecting facilities, the IACUC needs to ensure that facility and animal activity areas are thoroughly reviewed by people who are well trained and capable of taking a fresh, critical look at those areas.

Be sure to review other “activities”
The semiannual review needs to include all animal activities, including those that sometimes might be overlooked during the program review or facility inspection.

This includes activities such as dosing, tattooing, transporting animals using institutionally-owned vehicles, and routine procedures using agricultural animals such as dehorning and castration.

Ongoing or twice yearly?
To make it more manageable, some institutions are making the semiannual review an ongoing process.

“I recommend that the major review areas be discussed at every monthly IACUC meeting,” Greene says. “You may not have anything to say about some of the areas, but the fact that they are brought up keeps key issues at the forefront all the time.”

Greene cites occupational health and safety as an example. If there’s an opportunity to talk about it every month, rather than just formally review it every six months, committee members are more likely to remember things they’ve observed in the labs or heard in the corridors.

“I especially encourage institutions that are in the mode of rebuilding their program to consider this type of ongoing review process,” Greene says.

Others still recommend the twice-yearly approach.

“The hesitation I have with an ongoing review process is that it doesn’t give you a complete picture at any given point in time,” DeLong says. “If you do a little every month, you may not be sure where you are in the process. On the other hand, big universities may find that it’s the only way they can get the semiannual review done—especially the facility inspection part.”

Note that you can use your institution’s triennial AAALAC site visit to fulfill your semiannual review requirement for that time period. PHS advocates doing this, and provides guidance on the OLAW web site at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-00-007.html.

Designate significant vs. minor deficiencies, and develop a system for following up
A common mistake is failing to categorize deficiencies identified during the semiannual program review and facility inspection as “significant” or “minor.” You must also establish a schedule for correcting them, as well as a follow-up plan to ensure that the scheduled corrections are met.

A significant deficiency is one that poses a threat to the health of animals or people. A minor deficiency does not. AAALAC evaluators will review semiannual reports to verify that deficiencies have been categorized, and that there is a plan in place to correct them.
“...a plan and timetable don’t do much unless you close the loop...”

Be firm about follow-up

“I see people discussing program concerns and possible improvements and giving verbal updates, but they won’t decide exactly what they’ve got to fix and how they’ll go about it,” DeLong says. “As a result, corrections may not get done.”

You must have some type of action plan that identifies what needs to be done, who is responsible for making sure it gets done, and target a deadline for when it will be done. “It has to be documented. Categorizing the deficiencies as significant or minor and writing an action plan is a way to make sure something happens—that the needed changes are made,” DeLong says.

“But a plan and timetable don’t do much unless you close the loop,” Rosenquist adds. “The IACUC is responsible for making sure that issues get resolved. Follow-up is a major IACUC responsibility.”

At the University of Pennsylvania, Rosenquist explains that they track progress in correcting deficiencies through a multi-layered database that can be accessed by laboratory animal research staff, facilities staff, and the IACUC. This system works well because it keeps everyone on the animal care and use team up-to-date.

The importance of post-approval monitoring

Failure to adequately monitor protocols after they are approved is another deficiency that comes up often at meetings of AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation.

“Post-approval monitoring of protocols is an important issue,” says John G. Miller, Executive Director of AAALAC. “Too often protocols are approved then put away until the next time they are up for review. In the interim, what happens in the lab may not precisely match what was approved on paper.”

In their September 2003 article in Contemporary Topics, “Post-Approval Monitoring of Animal Use Protocols,” Douglas Stone, D.V.M., and Barbara Garibaldi D.V.M. (who have both served on AAALAC’s Council on Accreditation), refer to this as “protocol drift.” The article discusses the importance of post-approval monitoring (PAM), and explains that PAM programs can be active or passive (a passive program is one where no one is responsible for actively monitoring research that has been approved).

The authors state that a passive program may be acceptable for institutions that are already extremely committed to compliance. But most institutions are better served by taking a proactive approach to post-approval monitoring. The article concludes that “While there is no one-size-fits-all solution regarding PAM, it behooves all institutions to closely monitor all protocols through a PAM program in an effort to ensure the public’s trust.”

Including some type of protocol check as part of the semiannual review is one way to institute an active PAM program. Other ongoing measures, such as monitoring by compliance officers or regular checks conducted by veterinary staff or IACUC members, can also be implemented. A PAM program can take many different forms, but the ultimate goal should be ensuring that the research is being conducted the way it was proposed and approved.

Educate your IACUC

An effective semiannual review starts with an educated IACUC.

“A lot of IACUCs see the semiannual review as a burden because, let’s face it, it’s a lot of work,” DeLong says. “It helps if IACUC members understand that doing the semiannual review well can help keep the institution out of trouble and help them anticipate things that may become problems, instead of just reacting to problems.”

Before the inspection, make sure that the people doing the inspection know what to look for, so the process is efficient and effective. The non-affiliated member of the IACUC or any non-scientist may need some extra briefing. Materials including the OLAW Checklist (previously cited) can be very useful in educating and guiding new IACUC members, especially the community and non-scientist members.

“IACUC members who don’t know what to look for will get frustrated and bored,” DeLong says. “Tell them what to look for in terms of the animals, identification, expired drugs, the rooms, and so on. Then they don’t feel like they’re just wandering around.”

DeLong adds that one of the hardest challenges is to get committee members to participate in the “program” part of the review.

“Don’t make the vet responsible for the entire program review,” Rosenquist advises. “Get the entire committee involved or create subcommittees to spearhead different parts.”

IACUC members must be aware of the scope of topics they should cover in the program review, what facilities need to be inspected, and what additional activities should be addressed. When IACUCs have a weak semiannual review process, it’s often because they simply aren’t aware of what needs to be included.

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“When you talk to investigators as part of the review process, make it educational—make it an opportunity for the committee to learn about their research, and for the investigators to gain a greater understanding of the purpose of the IACUC and how its goal is to create a better program that will ultimately benefit them...”

Prep staff

As mentioned in the 2002 Connection article on semiannual reviews, when front-line staff are unaware of the purpose of the semiannual review, they may perceive the process as confrontational—as a judgment on their individual abilities and expertise, or as just another form of regulatory burden.

A way to avoid this is to educate animal care and facility staff as well as help them understand that the purpose of the review is not to assign blame for any deficiencies, but to find out how the entire team can continue making improvements to the larger program—improvements that will benefit the animals, the research, and the staff.

This can be done in a number of ways, through e-mails, memoranda, meetings, brief seminars—any mechanism that educates them on the process and purpose and helps them feel part of a team instead of feeling under attack. A simple memorandum to staff and investigators explaining the semiannual and why it’s important—and letting them know it’s not designed to catch people doing things wrong—can go a long way in making it a collegial, problem-solving process.

It may also be productive to spend extra time with investigators to educate them on the IACUC’s role, and also to get a better feel for what’s happening in the laboratories.

“When you talk to investigators as part of the review process, make it educational—make it an opportunity for the committee to learn about their research, and for the investigators to gain a greater understanding of the purpose of the IACUC and the fact that the committee’s goal is to create a better program that will ultimately benefit them,” Greene says.

This approach is not only more collegial, it can also be used as a way to find out if the animal care and use program is meeting the needs of the researchers.

“For example, you can ask investigators who use rodents in their research for feedback on the rodent care and use program,” Greene says. She notes that you can also get helpful feedback from investigators on other program areas such as environmental enrichment.

Use the review as an opportunity

A lot of information is gathered during each semiannual review—facts that can be used to spot trends or areas that continue to generate deficiencies. Identifying and keeping track of repeat deficiencies can be useful in zeroing in on chronic problems. Capturing this information and reviewing it regularly can help you identify systemic issues.

“The semiannual helps develop an ‘institutional memory’ about the animal care and use program,” DeLong says. “It provides some continuity and ensures that progress is made every six months.”

Pay attention to the “qualitative” information collected as well as the quantitative data. Talking to lots of people during the program review and inspection is a great way to get a real feel for how your program is operating. Are investigators satisfied with the animal care? Are the technicians familiar with the research protocols? Do the managers feel that things are running smoothly? The verbal feedback you get through conversations can provide important insights.

“The semiannual provides a venue where issues can be raised, discussed and dealt with systematically,” DeLong says. “It takes a lot of time, but done well, it’s worthwhile.”

RESOURCES


• OLAW-sponsored IACUC 101 workshop schedule. Available online at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/iancuc101s.htm

• The IACUC resources section of the AAALAC International web site: http://www.aaalac.org/resources/iacucinfo.cfm

• The IACUC Handbook, CRC Press, information available online at: www.crcpress.com


• www.iacuc.org
What does AAALAC look for in terms of the semiannual review?

So exactly what is the AAALAC Council on Accreditation looking for in terms of your semiannual review? Hilton J. Klein, M.S., V.M.D., a member of AAALAC’s Board of Trustees, Executive Director of Comparative Medicine at Merck Pharmaceuticals and past Council president says the Council is primarily looking to see that your IACUC is diligent and responsible in conducting the review.

“In my experience, Council typically looks for documentation that the process was completed in an effective manner,” Klein says. But he notes that, ultimately, the Council is looking at the outcomes of the reviews.

“It’s not just about documentation,” Klein says. “The Council also wants to know that there are mechanisms that allow the institution to effectively detect and correct problems.” Klein adds that the Council recognizes that every institution is going to have problems from time to time. “What Council really wants to see is that the IACUC has the authority and the resources to address issues and correct them in a way that improves the welfare of the animals.”

Common deficiencies noted by AAALAC evaluators

Here are some of the most common semiannual review deficiencies noted by AAALAC International evaluators:

- Absence of a timetable to correct identified deficiencies.
- Inadequacies in the occupational health and safety program.
- Inadequate IACUC procedures.
- No indication of significant vs. minor deficiencies.
- No record of minority opinions presented by committee members.
- No documentation that the review was provided to the Institutional Official.
- Failure to ensure that corrections are made.
- Failure to inspect all facilities including central, satellite and off-site facilities.

AAALAC’s online Student Information section offers links and resources on animals in research

Visit www.aaalac.org and click on “Resources” to find the Student Information section. To suggest additional resources e-mail lwieder@aaalac.org.
Q&A with AAALAC’s new Senior Director, Dr. James Swearengen

In February 2005, AAALAC International expanded its executive office staff and welcomed James R. Swearengen, D.V.M., as Senior Director. Dr. Swearengen is directing the expansion of AAALAC’s education and outreach activities into a formal program, as well as overseeing the growth of the accreditation program by identifying and developing new markets. Instead of the typical list of “new staff member” questions, Connection asked Dr. Swearengen to share his thoughts on some broader issues ...

Q. Why AAALAC?
A. “After serving several years as an ad hoc consultant and three years as an AAALAC International Council member, I was thoroughly convinced of the benefits of accreditation and the tremendous positive impact it has on all species of animals used in research, training or testing. As a native Missourian, I tend to put into practice the state’s motto of “show me”—I was not convinced of the benefit of accreditation by what I had read or been told, but by what I had seen. I saw how a peer review system and a partnership approach can lead to continuing improvements in an institution’s animal care and use program. I was always impressed with the common sense displayed and resultant leveling effect that occurred during Council deliberations. After spending nearly 15 years at the institutional level of laboratory animal medicine and research support, I wanted something that would be just as rewarding and challenging. As a former attending veterinarian of two different accredited animal care and use programs, I remember the thirst I had for information from AAALAC on a whole variety of topics. I think AAALAC International can provide a tremendous service to both accredited and non-accredited organizations and put to excellent use AAALAC International’s 40 years of experience in the field. I really feel that there needs to be another mechanism for interaction, other than the triennial site visit, that organizations can use to get the AAALAC International perspective and training on a focused topic or topics.”

Q. What will be the biggest challenges facing laboratory animal professionals and researchers in the years ahead?
A. “I think one of the greatest challenges that both professions will face is a shortage of people. Experienced laboratory animal veterinarians, technicians, and animal caregivers are becoming harder and harder to find, and scientists have predicted for several years a shortage of Ph.D.s as well. The challenge will be to recruit and then retain qualified and experienced people in these fields, while knowing that many of these positions will require working long hours until the shortage is relieved. As most people in these fields know, this is no revelation. I do know that related professional organizations are aware of the situation and are working to bring the brightest and the best into these fields.”

Q. What are you most looking forward to in your new position?
A. “Every day I come to work, I can’t really believe that I’m here. I recently made the comment that I must be enjoying my position because I even find myself smiling while sitting in the large parking lot known as Interstate 270 South. I

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guess the thing I enjoy most is working in an environment of such incredible professionalism and dedication. For the future I am looking forward to seeing the AAALAC International program grow by reaching out to all arenas of animal research around the world and grow in its ability to be more accessible through providing education and training to the research community.”

Q. What should folks in the field know about you?
A. “Other than not to get me started talking about my family, I guess one of the things that I would like people to know is the passion I have for AAALAC International and what it does to help ensure that the highest standards are maintained for animals used in research, teaching or testing and subsequently what it does to help scientists get the absolute best results from their incredibly important work. Although I hope that people who know me are already aware of this, but for those who don’t know me, I also want to make sure they know I am very approachable and always willing to take whatever amount of time they need to discuss an issue or help in any way I can.”

Congratulations to these organizations for earning accreditation!

Aves Labs, Inc., Tigard, Oregon
AWA R&D, Amgen, Inc., Thousand Oaks, California
Biomodels, LLC, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Cell Genesys, Inc., South San Francisco, California
Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska
Crucell Holland BV, Leiden, The Netherlands
Elm Hill Breeding Labs, Chelmsford, Massachusetts
Exelixis, Inc., South San Francisco, California
Harlan Baltimore Biotech Center, Baltimore, Maryland
Harlan Production Center, Haslett, Michigan
Hematech, LLC, Hull, Iowa
Ina Research Inc., Testing Facility, Nagano, Japan
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Reproductive Biology Center, St. Gabriel, Louisiana
MDS Pharma Services, Lyon, France
Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, Georgia
Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research, Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts
Phenomix Corporation, San Diego, California
Praecis Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Waltham, Massachusetts
Sun Health Research Institute, Sun City, Arizona
Taconic Anmed, Rockville, Maryland
The Rogosin Institute, Xenia, Ohio
The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China
University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

AAALAC seminars and workshops at AALAS ...

Attending the National AALAS meeting in November? The AAALAC International-sponsored seminar at AALAS will cover “Contracts, Collaborations and Co-Ownership: Roles and Responsibilities of the Institution,” and is scheduled for Tuesday, November 8, 2005, from 8:00-10:45 a.m. AAALAC will also host a workshop “Preparing for an AAALAC International Site Visit” from 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. on November 8, 2005, (registration with AALAS is required). Don’t miss these great education sessions!
In April 2005, AAALAC International asked 670+ contacts at AAALAC accredited institutions to participate in an online survey to gauge interest in an AAALAC education program. An overwhelming number of completed surveys—421—were received. (Thanks to all who took the time to respond!) The results of the survey included these findings:

- Of the 421 people who responded, 154 were from colleges and universities, 71 from government agencies, 74 from pharmaceutical and biotech companies, 54 from contract laboratories, 31 from hospitals, and the remainder were from some other type of research institution.

- Of the 421 people who responded, 66% expressed “extremely high interest,” or said they are “very interested” in participating in education programs offered by AAALAC International. Only 7% said they have little or no interest.

- We asked respondents to rank the educational areas that interest them the most. “Animal care committee issues” was the clear leader, followed by “occupational health and safety,” “animal environment and husbandry issues,” “veterinary care,” “facility (physical plant) issues,” and “the accreditation process” in that order.

- Respondents said that veterinarians, animal care committee members, and facility managers are most likely to participate.

- “Web-based, self-paced online training” ranked the highest among preferred formats. Following close behind was the option to have “workshops offered at my institution.” Also ranked fairly high were “workshops offered in various locations across the country (not held in conjunction with another conference)” and “workshops offered in conjunction with other conferences.”

- If AAALAC were to offer workshops in conjunction with other conferences, the conferences that received the greatest number of responses were: National AALAS, PRIM&R, and OLAW workshops.

Based on the survey results, AAALAC is moving forward with an initial program that will offer on site training and education in topical areas ranging from protocol review, personnel training, and other IACUC issues, to animal husbandry, animal housing, and facility-related topics. The customized training program will provide the AAALAC perspective on these issues in order to help institutions achieve and maintain AAALAC International accreditation. The training will be conducted at the host facility (the organization requesting the training) and led by AAALAC experts who have an in-depth knowledge of the accreditation process and current issues. A menu of different training modules are currently in development. Each module will be highly flexible and tailored to the specific needs and objectives of the host institution. Fees for the training will be negotiated in advance and based on training requested and the travel costs. AAALAC’s training and education program is designed to provide the information institutions need to proactively manage animal care and use issues in ways that meet AAALAC International standards. Modules are expected to be ready later this fall and early 2006. In the meantime, if your institution is interested in participating in the AAALAC training and education program, or to discuss future training opportunities in more detail, please contact Dr. Jim Swearengen, Senior Director, at 301.231.5353 or jswearengen@aaalac.org.
AAALAC International launches a “Technician Fellowship Award”

AAALAC International has launched a new awards program, the “AAALAC International Technician Fellowship.” The program is made possible 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), the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The Fellowship recognizes two outstanding technicians—one IAT Registered (RAnTech) technician and one AALAS certified (ALAT, LAT, LATG, or CMAR) technician—who have made (or have the potential to make) significant contributions to the field of laboratory animal care and use.

As part of the Fellowship, the IAT Registered recipient will participate in a week-long educational internship at an animal care and use program within a U.S. institution, then attend the National AALAS meeting. The AALAS certified recipient will participate in a week-long educational internship at an animal care and use program within an institution in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, then attend the IAT meeting. Both recipients will write an article about their experiences for the AAALAC International Connection newsletter.

Nominations for AALAS Registered Technicians will be accepted through September 31. Nomination packages must include:

1. One nomination letter
2. The nominee’s curriculum vitae or resume
3. Three letters of support

Nomination Packages should be sent to:

AAALAC International
C/O The AAALAC International Technician Fellowship Selection Committee
11300 Rockville Pike, Suite 1211
Rockville, MD 20852-3035

If you have any questions about the Fellowship Award contact John G. Miller at AAALAC International +301.231.5353 or accredit@aaalac.org.

Congratulations Cathy Godfrey!

AAALAC International Technician Fellowship Award – 2005 U.K. Recipient

Cathy Godfrey, FIAT, RAnTech, is Technical Manager of the Biomedical Services Unit at the University of Sheffield, one of the U.K.’s leading universities. In this position she’s responsible for 14 technical staff, training, and ensuring that her department meets the highest possible standards as well as budgetary targets.

Cathy has 33 years experience working in biomedical research programs involving all of the common species of laboratory animals. Throughout the past 28 years her main roles have been managing animal facilities and, more recently, caring for genetically altered mice.

In addition to her professional duties, Cathy is an active member of the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT) and has served on its Council for more than 20 years. She currently serves as IAT’s Honorary Secretary and as part of the Institute’s Continuing Professional Development Group. Cathy is also a Registered Animal Technician, demonstrating her commitment to animal care and the welfare of laboratory animals.

As the very first U.K. recipient of the AAALAC Technician Fellowship Award, Cathy hopes to “exchange ideas with others, including training and development techniques, to compare the different systems employed in the U.S. and U.K.” She adds, “By furthering my knowledge and sharing skills and ideas, I feel I can better promote good animal welfare and practices. This award will provide an excellent opportunity to do so.”
Not yet accredited?
**AAALAC’s “Program Status Evaluation” service can be the first step toward earning accreditation...**

The Program Status Evaluation (PSE) service is a completely confidential peer review that helps assess the quality of all aspects of your animal research program, including animal husbandry, veterinary care, institutional policies, and the facilities where animals are housed and used.

Because good science demands quality animal care, the evaluation will not only promote the well-being of laboratory animals, it will help validate the results of research using animals. It can also serve as the first step toward achieving AAALAC accreditation, a distinction earned by hundreds of research institutions that are upholding the highest standards for research animal care.

The objective of the PSE service is twofold. First, it’s meant to assist institutions in determining if their animal care and use programs meet AAALAC standards by identifying weaknesses and suggesting ways to improve or correct them. Second, it’s meant to familiarize institutions with the AAALAC accreditation process and encourage them to participate.

As part of the service, your institution will receive a written report from the PSE evaluation team. The report will identify areas that need improvement in order to meet AAALAC standards, and suggest other modifications to consider to further improve your program. Your evaluation report is completely confidential. Fees for the PSE service are negotiated in advance and based on the cost of conducting the evaluation visit plus administrative expenses.

The PSE service is available to companies, universities, hospitals, and other research facilities around the world who have never participated in AAALAC’s accreditation program. More information is available at www.aaalac.org, by calling 301.231.5353 in the United States, 32.2.761.6678 in Europe, or by sending an e-mail to accredit@aaalac.org.