



## About AAALAC International

Below are answers to some of the most common general questions about AAALAC International's organisation, governance and the accreditation programme. For more details please visit [www.aaalac.org](http://www.aaalac.org).

### Main Office:

5205 Chairman's Court  
Suite 300, Frederick, MD  
21703, USA  
t:+301.696.9626  
f:+301.696.9627  
[accredit@aaalac.org](mailto:accredit@aaalac.org)

European Office: Apartado  
de Correos, 266 31080  
Pamplona (Spain) t:+34  
948 100026  
f:+1 301.696.9627  
[europe@aaalac.org](mailto:europe@aaalac.org)

Southeast Asia Office:  
250/830 Moo3 Bangpla Soi  
18 Bangpla, Bangplee,  
Samutprakarn  
Thailand 10540  
t:+6688-428-2543  
t:+662 175 5918,  
f:+662 175 5917  
[seasia@aaalac.org](mailto:seasia@aaalac.org)

### What is AAALAC International?

AAALAC International is a private, nonprofit organisation that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through a voluntary accreditation programme, a programme status evaluation service, and educational programmes.

### How is AAALAC governed?

AAALAC International is governed by a Board of Directors. AAALAC is also advised by a House of Delegates which represents a wide variety of prestigious scientific, educational and professional organizations—they are referred to as AAALAC's "Member Organisations." Each of these Member Organisations appoints a Member Organisation Delegate to serve a three-year term in the House of Delegates. European Member Organisations include FELASA, ESLAV, ECLAM, NC3Rs, EFPIA, Interpharma, AO Foundation and IAT.

### What is the Council on Accreditation?

The Council is comprised of highly-accomplished animal care and use and research professionals from around the globe who conduct the programme reviews and final deliberations that determine which institutions are awarded AAALAC International accreditation. Their responsibilities include conducting site visits, reviewing site visit reports, evaluating information, reviewing yearly reports from accredited institutions, and conferring the accreditation status of institutions. European programmes are evaluated by the "European Section" of the Council, which is exclusively composed of European professionals.

### Who are ad hoc Consultants/Specialists?

AAALAC International maintains a worldwide pool of more than 350 ad hoc Consultants/Specialists (including 60+ Europeans) who have expertise in traditional laboratory animal species as well as special expertise (for example, in aquatics, non-human primates or agricultural science). Many also have unique discipline competencies, such as applied neuroscience, behavioural science, toxicology, pharmacology or physiology. Ad hoc Consultants/Specialists accompany Council members on site visits and make recommendations on accreditation to the Council. These specialists add depth to the site visit team. They understand the intricacies of combining research, testing and educational missions with animal well-being.

### Does AAALAC International make its own regulations and policies?

No, AAALAC is not a regulatory body and does not make or enforce regulations. Instead, AAALAC International relies on Three Primary Standards used by the Council to evaluate programmes: the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123); the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, NRC 2011; and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)*, 2020). AAALAC International does publish "Position Statements" that can be used as supplemental guidelines in dealing with certain issues, such as the use of farm animals, occupational health and safety, or adequate veterinary care. AAALAC International also publishes its "Rules of Accreditation," a document that lists the minimum criteria institutions must meet before they can be considered for accreditation. (All of these resources can be found at [www.aaalac.org](http://www.aaalac.org) under the "Accreditation" section.)

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## How extensive is an AAALAC International evaluation?

AAALAC evaluates all aspects of an animal care and use programme. An animal programme (as defined by AAALAC International) includes an organisation's procedures and overall performance in animal care and use. The basic components that are evaluated include (but are not limited to) institutional policies and responsibilities (includes ethical review process and OHSP); animal environment, housing and husbandry; veterinary care; and physical plant.

## What deficiencies are most often noted by AAALAC site visitors?

The number and frequency of deficiencies found during site visits continues to decline. At any point in time, about 97 percent of all institutions currently participating in the accreditation programme have a fully accredited status. When problem areas are cited, they most frequently involve: animal environment (social housing, environmental enrichment); occupational health and safety; IACUC or Equivalent Oversight Body; or heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

## Does AAALAC International accredit agricultural animal programmes?

Yes. Programmes that use agricultural animals in research or for teaching are embracing the AAALAC accreditation programme. Appendix A of the European Convention ETS123, the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching* (Ag Guide, 2020), and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (NRC 2011) are used to provide general parameters for the use of agricultural animals. AAALAC recognises 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, Guide, or ETS 123 is most appropriate. The collective professional judgment of

the IACUC or comparable Oversight Body, principal investigator and veterinarian should determine which standard 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.

## Is accreditation available to small animal care and use programmes?

Yes. The standards used to evaluate programmes are universal and can be implemented in programmes of any size. Likewise, programmes using nontraditional research animals, such as fish or birds, are also encouraged to seek accreditation.

## Does AAALAC use the same standards to evaluate animal programmes internationally?

Because each country has its own set of laws and regulations, AAALAC International site visitors use a customised approach for evaluating programmes internationally. Evaluators take into account applicable laws and regulations of the host country, and the overall performance of the programme as it relates to appropriate animal welfare objectives. They also evaluate the extent to which the programme conforms with the performance standards and principles outlined in the Three Primary Standards and other international reference resources. In Europe, the *Guide* is specially taken in consideration for those areas (e.g.: veterinary care) not well defined in the main European documents (ETS 123 and applicable legislation).

## Are the results of an AAALAC site visit confidential?

The entire accreditation process is confidential. The accreditation evaluation and its results are kept between the organisation seeking accreditation and AAALAC International—even if deficiencies are found. AAALAC's

purpose is to provide a peer-evaluation that results in valuable information that an organisation can use to improve its programme and achieve new levels of excellence. Board and Council members, ad hoc Consultants/Specialists and AAALAC staff are all required to sign confidentiality agreements. Conflict-of-interest statements are also signed by each site visitor. AAALAC representatives agree to treat all materials as privileged and safeguard the materials in their possession.

## How does an institution maintain AAALAC accreditation?

Once accredited, an institution must file an annual report to AAALAC International, noting any changes and the current condition of the animal care and use programme. Each accredited institution is revisited and re-evaluated once every three years in order to maintain its accredited status.

## How much does accreditation cost?

Organisations 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 facility. An institution that has very few animals will pay much smaller fees than one that maintains a large vivarium and extensive support areas. The fees cover the cost of periodic site visits and administrative expenses (see [www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/fees-and-deadlines/](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/fees-and-deadlines/)).

## How many animal care and use programs are accredited by AAALAC International?

More than 1,100 animal care and use programmes in 50 countries (more than 120 in 22 European countries) have earned AAALAC International accreditation. These programmes include academic institutions, commercial organisations, government agencies, hospitals, nonprofit organisations, and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.

