

Ensuring Animal Welfare: Penn State's AAALAC Accreditation

Adapted in part from information published on the AAALAC website (<http://www.aaalac.org>)

The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) accredited The Pennsylvania State University on February 13, 2001. AAALAC promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through a voluntary accreditation program through which “research programs demonstrate that they not only meet the minimums required by law, but are going the extra step to achieve excellence in animal care”. To date, more than 770 organizations have earned accreditation through AAALAC, indicating a commitment to animal welfare and appropriate animal use in research.

To become accredited, Penn State had to carry out an extensive self-assessment of all aspects of the animal research program. AAALAC evaluators reviewed the self-assessment and conducted a site-visit at the University to ensure that regulations and standards of care were being met. Penn State is currently in the process of applying for re-accreditation. AAALAC will conduct site visits at the University Park campus during the summer trimester (May, June or July of 2009).

AAALAC accreditation offers several benefits to Penn State:

- 1) Signals a quality program: Accreditation demonstrates that Penn State is serious about setting, achieving, and maintaining high standards for animal care and use.
- 2) Enhances scientific validity: Reliable results in scientific research involving animals depend on superior animal care. Accreditation engages scientists, managers, and administrators in a rigorous assessment of the Penn State program, ultimately resulting in better research practices and outcomes.
- 3) Demonstrates accountability: Accreditation demonstrates a willingness to go above and beyond what is required by law to conduct animal research in a humane manner. It tells the Penn State community that we are committed to responsible animal research.
- 4) Provides assurances to funding sources: Many funding sources view AAALAC accreditation as a commitment to program excellence, and as an assurance that animal use will be justified and humane and regulations will be followed.