

*Chapter Six*

# The History of the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International

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Sister organizations—although the phrase is frequently used to denote groups with similar missions or goals, few can be said to be blood relatives. Not so in the case of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) and the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC). The two groups have a parent in common. In Chapter one, you learned of the early development and activities of the Animal Care Panel (ACP), especially the evolution of the ACP into the national AALAS organization.

This chapter relates the story of how the ACP gave birth to what was to become the preeminent accrediting body for laboratory animal care and use programs in the world—AAALAC International. The AAALAC of today differs little from its progenitor. It continues to provide a voluntary accreditation program that utilizes panels of experts, applying performance standards through both on-site peer review and the process of deliberation, to promote the humane treatment of animals in science (1). Those who are interested in greater detail of AAALAC's origins and development are encouraged to read two publications of J. Derrell Clark, which served as the basis for much of this chapter (2)(3).

## ***Founders and Foundation***

World War II and the surging economy that followed laid the groundwork for a science boom that included the burgeoning of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the concept of taxpayer funding of health-related research. As a result, in the late 1940s, the field of animal research underwent consider-

Table 1. Members of Original AFAB

Bennett J. Cohen
George Bjotvedt
Nathan R. Brewer
Jules S. Cass
L.R. Christensen
Robert J. Flynn
Berton F. Hill
Warren G. Hoag
Geoffrey H. Lord
M.M. Rabstein
Orland A. Soave
Bernard F. Trum

able growth. As a consequence of this growth, the specialties of laboratory animal science and medicine began to evolve.

It was in this atmosphere of rapid change in animal research that five veterinarians involved in managing laboratory animal facilities at major institutions in Chicago informally gathered to discuss and share information about the care of laboratory animals. These pioneers included Nathan R. Brewer, DVM, PhD, University of Chicago; Elihu Bond, DVM, University of Illinois; Bennett J. Cohen, DVM, PhD, Northwestern University; Robert J. Flynn, DVM, Argonne National Laboratory; and Robert J. Schroeder, DVM, Hektoen Institute for Medical Research of Cook County Hospital. Before the end of the decade, a movement emerged from this group to form a national organization to address the issues facing the growing field of laboratory animal science. This group became the ACP.

The ACP held its first annual meeting in Chicago in 1950. At that meeting, Carl F. Schlotthauer of the Mayo Foundation emphasized the necessity to “establish some uniformity in animal handling.” Although ACP members recognized the need for standards, certification, and accreditation during the period between 1950 and 1960, the organization struggled with ways and means to implement such programs. As early as 1951, the ACP had a Committee on Animal Care Standards and a Committee on Regulations for the Care of the Dog. In 1952, the latter committee published *Standards for the Care of the Dog Used in Medical Research*.

About 1957, an *ad hoc* Committee for the Consideration of Animal Regulatory Activities (“Accreditation” Committee) was appointed. In 1958, the committee unanimously recommended that the ACP undertake regulatory and accreditation functions for laboratory animal maintenance and care. However, there was disagreement regarding the standards to be used and whether animals’ health status should be a factor in determining accreditation status.

Over the next two years, the ACP established and renamed a variety of groups to focus on the issues of developing standards and accreditation criteria. In 1960, the Animal Facilities Standards Committee, which developed the standards, and the Animal Facilities Accreditation Board (AFAB—see table 1), which developed the accreditation program, were in place.

In the fall of 1964 the AFAB submitted to the ACP Board of Directors an in-depth report entitled *Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Facilities*. One of the report’s recommendations was that the accreditation program be an autonomous entity, not part of any existing organization. In accepting this recommendation the Board recognized the underlying premise, that a national accreditation program would require the endorsement and active involvement of the scientific community. Creating a new non-profit corporation would—and subsequently did—strengthen

and promote acceptance of the program through the participation of interested scientific, professional, and educational organizations and associations.

## Organizational Elements

### Member Organizations

From the beginning, the founders of what was to become AAALAC realized that acceptance by the scientific and professional community was vital to the success of an accreditation program. Early on, there was discussion of an advisory committee to the Board consisting of representatives from leading scientific, educational, and professional organizations. The National Advisory Committee (NAC) to the AFAB was appointed in January 1964, and consisted of representatives from seven organizations that helped finance a program to test the feasibility of an accreditation program. Its charge was to: 1) represent the interest of the scientific community generally in the program; 2) represent the classes of institutions likely to be affected by the program; and 3) advise the AFAB in implementing the program nationally.

The original seven organizations that comprised the NAC were: American College of Physicians, American Dental Association, American Hospital Association, American Medical Association, Association of American Medical Colleges, Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges, and Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association. The NAC was later expanded to include representatives of other organizations with a major interest in the program, including: American Association of Dental Schools, American Heart Association, American Veterinary Medical Association, National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, and the National Society for Medical Research.

These 13 associations, along with the ACP and the American College of Surgeons, were the founding member organizations of AAALAC. As the Association evolved, its member organizations were vital to the financial success of the program by virtue of their annual grants. This support provided the time necessary for the accreditation program to become self-sufficient through annual fees from accredited units.

In April, 1965, Articles of Incorporation were filed under the "General Not for Profit Corporation Act" in the state of Illinois (AAALAC continues to be incorporated in Illinois). Later that month, on April 30, 1965, the first organizational meeting of the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care was held in Des Plaines, Ill. The Articles of Incorporation were accepted; the proposed by-laws were presented, discussed, and subsequently adopted as amended; and the members of the NAC were named as the Board of Trustees.

At the first meeting of the Board later that same day, Joseph J. Garvey, ACP Executive Secretary, was appointed as the Executive Secretary of AAALAC, and the Council on Accreditation was established.

The growth of AAALAC over the next 30 years is reflected not only in the number of programs attaining accreditation, but also in the growth of the number of member organizations. In 1999, the Board of Trustees is comprised of representatives from nearly 50 professional, scientific, and educational societies and organizations. The Council on Accreditation has also developed from the original 12 to the current 30 member Council, and has expanded to include international expertise.

### Council on Accreditation

The Council on Accreditation has always been a critical element in the accreditation process. Serving on the Council requires a major personal and professional commitment and is a time-consuming and labor-intensive activity.

In the early days of AAALAC, the Council was very active in all aspects of the program including finances and policy making. As AAALAC grew and matured, the Board assumed more of its constitutional role, thereby allowing the Council to focus on its primary mission—accreditation.

At its first meeting in 1965, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution to invite the 12 people serving on the ACP Accreditation Board to accept appointments to the AAALAC Council on Accreditation. All 12 individuals accepted, and since 1968 appointments to the Council have taken place annually. Members serve terms of four years, with a two term limit.

In 1989, AAALAC initiated the Scientific/Technical Panel, to augment Council through adding experts from fields other than clinical laboratory animal medicine. Panelists initially participated only as additional team members on site visits. As they gained experience, the lines between this group and other Council members became less distinct. Thus, in the mid 1990s, use of the term was discontinued and all are referred to as Council members.

One of the keys to the success of AAALAC's accreditation program is the process by which the initial peer review of institutional programs by Council members is amplified by the additional peer review that takes place in the deliberations of the full Council. Originally, the Council met as a group semiannually to hear and deliberate the results of site visits. As the number of accredited units grew, so did the time required of Council at these meetings. Thus, in 1972 the meetings were increased to three each year. In 1977 deliberations took place in two sections and in 1997, the 28-member Council met as three sections.

Prior to 1989, institutions being visited were provided very little immediate feedback regarding site visitors' findings. In response to clients' concerns over the limited feedback provided prior to full Council deliberations, exit briefings were initiated in 1989, with the site visit team providing their preliminary findings and indicating what their recommendation to the Council would be regarding the institution's accreditation status.

### Consultants

From its inception, *ad hoc* consultants to the Council have been an integral and important part of the accreditation program. *Ad hoc* consultants accompany Council members on site visits and assist in assessing animal care and use programs. Hundreds of professionals representing various aspects of science have made major contributions to the program by serving in this capacity. By the mid 1990s, the number of individuals applying to AAALAC to be considered as *ad hoc* consultants, and those already serving at that time, far exceeded the number needed. In 1997, the Board approved a Council plan to limit the number of laboratory animal medicine "generalist" consultants to 65. Former Council members and over 50 "specialists" in areas ranging from aquatic species to high hazard containment round out the pool of experts who serve as *ad hoc* consultants to the AAALAC Council.

### Administrative Offices and Officers

As noted above, administration of the accreditation program was provided initially as an additional duty of the AALAS

Executive Secretary. Joseph J. Garvey served in this capacity from AAALAC's inception in 1965 until 1975. During most of this time, AAALAC and ACP shared office space and staff support in offices in Joliet, Illinois. The growth of AAALAC during this period was dramatic. In less than ten years over 220 institutional programs became accredited. In 1975, Mr. Lee Heilman was appointed Executive Secretary, a position he maintained until a major administrative restructuring and office relocation in 1986.

The enactment of animal welfare related legislation in 1985 (amendments to the Animal Welfare and Public Health Service Acts), along with the increase in activities by groups opposed to the use of animals in research led the AAALAC Board to relocate its office near the center of federal government activity. Such relocation, along with the employment of a senior, respected laboratory animal veterinarian in a leadership role, enabled AAALAC to play a more active and timely role in the events of the time. In 1986 the AAALAC office was moved to Bethesda, MD and Dr. Albert E. New, an American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM) Diplomate and former director of laboratory animal medicine at the National Cancer Institute, was appointed Executive Director.

During Dr. New's tenure, the number of accredited units continued to grow dramatically, with nearly 550 programs having become accredited by mid-1995. Also growing during this period was AAALAC's level of participation and leadership in the discussions surrounding legislation and federal oversight in the area of animal welfare. Having employed performance standards in assessing animal care and use programs for more than 25 years (at that time), AAALAC was uniquely qualified to provide information to that debate and did so through participation in many seminars and workshops of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In 1994, Kathryn A. L. Bayne, MS, PhD, DVM, ACLAM Diplomate and a noted scientific authority in nonhuman primate behavior, was appointed as AAALAC's first Associate Director. Dr. Bayne continues to serve in this capacity and has primary responsibilities for direction and oversight of the AAALAC Accreditation Program. She also leads the team of evaluators who conduct AAALAC program status evaluations (see later). In 1995, Dr. New retired, with Dr. John Mulder serving in an interim capacity as Executive Director until the appointment in 1996 of Dr. John G. Miller.

## Standards

In 1961, the ACP began negotiating with the NIH regarding sponsorship of a grant to develop standards upon which an accreditation program could be based. In early 1962, the Division of Research Grants of the NIH issued a contract to the ACP to "determine and establish professional standards for laboratory animal care and facilities" (4). A related ACP news release at that time stated:

*It has been the concern of the scientific community that the care and management of laboratory animals be under the direction of professionally qualified personnel, that the proper housing be provided and that the animal care personnel be adequately trained. Within the past few years many new facilities have been constructed and many existing facilities are either being expanded or remodeled. Professional standards for the construction and maintenance of animal facilities and for laboratory animal care have not as yet been developed and published. Information is needed. There is also a need to discuss and evaluate existing knowledge.*

Publication of the *Guide for Laboratory Animal Facilities and Care* (5) in March 1963 by the U.S. Public Health Service culminated two and one-half years of work to prepare professionally appropriate criteria for the care of laboratory animals. In addition to the NIH contract, preparation of the first edition of the *Guide* was supported by funding from the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Heart Association, the New York State Society for Medical Research, and the Medical Research Association of California.

Subsequent editions of the renamed *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (6) have been prepared by committees of scientific experts appointed by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council's Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources (ILAR), which itself was renamed the Institute for Laboratory Animal Research in 1995. This separation of the preparation and evaluation of standards between ILAR and AAALAC has been an important component of the success of both the *Guide* and the accreditation program. The *Guide* comprises standards prepared by scientists for application in scientific activities involving animals, with AAALAC serving as an independent, non-vested evaluator of their appropriate implementation.

While the *Guide* remains the principal standard against which animal care and use programs are measured in the accreditation process, other compilations of animal care and use recommendations and procedures are employed as well. The last several decades have seen a dramatic increase in the availability of peer-reviewed scientific literature, standards, and guidelines in areas ranging from the use of agricultural animals in agricultural research to research involving recombinant DNA molecules. AAALAC maintains and makes available a list of supplemental information about procedures or techniques related to the care and use of laboratory animals, referred to as reference resources.

As animal care and use programs have expanded and become more complex, the Council determined that there were instances in which additional specific guidance from AAALAC would benefit scientific institutions. Therefore, beginning in 1972 with the issue of adequate veterinary care, AAALAC instituted the publication of position statements to augment the *Guide* and to clarify its expectations in these areas.

With AAALAC's increased international involvement has come the recognition and application of multinational references, including directives and conventions dealing with animal welfare (7)(8), and formal guidelines developed by such multinational organizations as the Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations (FELASA). In 1998, the AAALAC Council began development of a comprehensive set of international reference resources to further the international harmonization of animal care and use practices.

## Programs

### Accreditation

Initially, AAALAC assessments involved animal care and physical plant matters. With time and subsequent revisions of the *Guide*, concerns about the use of animals intensified, and in 1983 AAALAC's assessments included evaluation of the use of animals. In contrast to the early by-laws, the December 3, 1985 version declared that the purpose of AAALAC is "to accredit animal care and use programs."

At the very time that AAALAC made this change, amendments to the Animal Welfare and Public Health Service Acts

added specific new requirements for institution-wide aspects of animal care and use programs. Organizational lines of authority and responsibility, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's role and responsibilities, training of personnel and occupational health and safety programs became areas of greater interest to organizations and increased scrutiny by AAALAC. Previously, site visits had begun with brief meetings with institutional officials, followed by discussions with veterinary and animal care personnel while viewing facilities. The Council member and *ad hoc* consultant made notes of these discussions and facility observations, from which they prepared the subsequent program description and site visit report for full Council review. The increased emphasis on administrative and programmatic areas of animal care and use led to a major change in AAALAC procedures. Beginning in 1986, institutions seeking accreditation or preparing for site revisits were required to submit an extensive, detailed program description with their applications.

Over the years, a number of other noteworthy procedural changes have taken place in the accreditation program. New categories of accreditation status were adopted, including probationary accreditation in 1970 and deferred continued accreditation in 1982. Perhaps the most significant change in procedure came about in 1989, when as previously noted, exit briefings by site visitors for institutional representatives were initiated. Prior to this time, institutions were largely uncertain of the likely outcome of their assessment until receipt of the Council-approved findings. The exit briefing not only eliminated this uncertainty, it allowed institutions to begin to immediately address the concerns of the site visit team. A logical extension of the exit briefings, the post site visit communications from institutions that addressed site visitor findings, were subsequently accepted by Council.

### Program Status Evaluation

In 1996, the Board adopted a Strategic Plan that included an emphasis on international growth and a change in the name of the organization to the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International. Increased exposure to international colleagues unfamiliar with AAALAC's programs and procedures was a key factor in the decision to initiate a new service for interested institutions, the Program Status Evaluation (PSE).

For many years AAALAC had received requests for what has colloquially been referred to as "pre-AAALAC" visits—some-what less formal assessments of an institution's readiness for accreditation. A sharp increase in the number of requests from institutions outside the United States led the Executive Committee to approve the addition of the PSE as a new AAALAC service. The PSE was intended to supplement the accreditation program by offering assessments of non-accredited animal care and use programs, relative to AAALAC standards, prior to a formal application for accreditation. Evaluations are conducted by a team led by AAALAC's Associate Director, Dr. Kathryn Bayne, and comprised of former Council members.

Intended for new applicants only, the PSE assists institutions in determining if their animal care and use program meets AAALAC International standards (i.e., is it accreditable), by identifying major areas which would preclude accreditation and suggesting methods of correction. It also helps familiarize institutions with the format of an AAALAC accreditation site visit.

### Education and Outreach

During the first several years of its existence, interest in becoming accredited by AAALAC was quite high, with approximately 100 institutions applying for site visits. As early as 1967, however, the Board more actively promoted AAALAC to the scientific community. A letter published in *Science* that year emphasized improvements in animal care facilities that resulted from the AAALAC program. In 1968, letters were sent to editors of member organizations' journals requesting placement of editorials or articles publicizing the AAALAC program, and promotional materials were first prepared and distributed to nearly 8,000 members of societies affiliated with the Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB). In 1971, advertisements promoting AAALAC first appeared, in both FASEB's *Federation Proceedings* and AALAS's *Laboratory Animal Science*. Also during this time, AAALAC began educational exhibits at professional and scientific meetings, a practice which continues and today includes exhibits at international meetings around the world.

AAALAC's first newsletter, *AAALAC Activities Report*, was issued to participants in the program in 1972, to "improve communication and understanding of the ongoing activities of AAALAC." As one result of a Strategic Plan adopted in 1989, a reformatted newsletter, *AAALAC Communiqué*, was developed and distributed more widely. The next Strategic Plan, adopted in 1996, brought about major changes in the organization's identity and goals. With an increased emphasis on growth of AAALAC programs internationally, the Board approved a change in the organization's name to the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International. With a new name came a modified logo, other administrative changes, and another revamping of the newsletter, now called *Connection*.

As noted above, AAALAC responded to the increase in animal-related issues confronting the life sciences community in the 1980s by expanded efforts to increase its visibility among professional audiences and the public. The Strategic Plan of 1989 called for a further expansion of these efforts, with emphasis on increasing awareness about the accreditation process and its importance in maintaining high standards for the care and use of animals in research, teaching, and testing. During the early 1990s, AAALAC was represented on the faculty of most regional and national conferences, seminars, and workshops dealing with animal issues. Beginning in 1997, AAALAC has been a co-sponsor of the largest national conference dealing with these issues, the annual animal welfare-related meeting of Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research. Responding to requests from accredited units for information on deficiency trends noted by site visitors, AAALAC hosted its first national forum addressing this topic in 1999.

### World Wide Web

By the mid-1990s, the growth of the World Wide Web became an important tool for dispersing information and materials. AAALAC took advantage of this new technology and created an Internet presence. The [www.aaalac.org](http://www.aaalac.org) web site has undergone several changes in its ever-expanding effort to inform the animal use community. In 1998, AAALAC launched its Global Gateway, assembling one of the most comprehensive listings of international animal care and use resources. By providing the latest news, online resources, and the recent addition of an interactive component, AAALAC's web site provides world wide exposure for issues of importance to all laboratory animal professionals.

### Summary

For over 30 years, AAALAC International has promoted high standards of animal care, use and well-being. What began with a group of five veterinarians has developed into an organization which has not only benefitted animal care, but has enhanced life-sciences research and education, and is widely accepted by the scientific community and granting agencies. Today, more than 600 institutions in 13 countries are accredited by AAALAC International—including academic institutions, commercial organizations, government agencies, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations.

The basic elements of AAALAC's accreditation program have changed very little from the time of the organization's conception. Standards have been revised frequently and sometimes dramatically, institutional animal care and use activities have become far more complex, and the Board has expanded the organization's horizons internationally. Yet the premise of AAALAC's programs—that the application of objective, external peer review of animal care and use promotes both animal well-being and science—remains sound and widely accepted.

But some things do change. The laboratory animal field has become increasingly science-based and programs employing animals in research, testing, and education have become increasingly international in scope. As our knowledge grows and the ability to share information increases, AAALAC is applying its original premise in new contexts and wider geographic areas. By striving to be at the forefront of efforts to harmonize animal care and use standards internationally (9), and by working to ensure uniform application of these standards, AAALAC is carrying on its proud tradition globally. It is participating in raising the benchmark for animal care and use internationally.

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