

AAALAC SITE VISIT '21

Fall 2021 Site Visit: November 8-12, 2021



What is AAALAC?

The University of Texas at Austin is proudly accredited by the [Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International \(AAALAC\)](#), a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through voluntary accreditation and assessment programs. UT Austin has been fully and continuously accredited since 2001. AAALAC conducts a peer-review site visit every three years and site visitors utilize the *Guide* as a basis for evaluation.

AAALAC accreditation is the "gold standard" for research programs. It demonstrates an institution's commitment to high standards of animal care in science and promotes scientific validity (superior animal care leads to better research practices, which leads to reliable and publishable data).

When is our upcoming site visit?

UT Austin's AAALAC site visit is scheduled for November 8-12. Investigators will receive a detailed schedule in the coming weeks.

ORSC staff update to support investigators

The Office of Research Support and Compliance is pleased to announce that Jennifer Cassaday has joined the department as Assistant Director of Animal Research Quality Assurance. Jennifer comes from the Animal Resource Center where she spent the past 16 years as the Training and Compliance Manager. In this new quality assurance role, she will serve as a liaison between the IACUC and research community and help to establish a quality assurance program that will provide education and assistance to researchers in maintaining animal research compliance.

If you would like individualized assistance preparing your laboratory for AAALAC (including record reviews, protocol discussion, etc.), [contact Jennifer](#) to schedule a QA visit online or in person.

What you need to know:

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What will my involvement look like as an investigator?

AAALAC evaluates all aspects of UT Austin's animal care and use program, including institutional leadership, IACUC and ARC functions, occupational health, environmental health and safety, and animal use in individual labs. Parts of the site visit will entail facility walk-through evaluations and PI laboratory visits. PIs or experienced laboratory managers will need to be present during the scheduled time-slots (TBA) to meet with AAALAC site visitors and describe how animals are used in the lab.



**AAALAC
reaccreditation is
a group effort.
Everyone must
prepare and
contribute in order
to demonstrate
what a strong
animal care and
use program we
have at UT Austin.**

**WE ARE ALL IN
THIS
TOGETHER!**

How do I prepare for the site visit?

Investigators should prepare their laboratory the same way they prepare for IACUC semiannual facility evaluations (use the ["Laboratory Self-Evaluation Checklists"](#)). Additional resources will be sent in the coming weeks.

If your laboratory is likely to undergo a site visit by AAALAC, you may also be contacted prior to the site visit to schedule a quality assurance visit with the [Assistant Director of Animal Research Quality Assurance](#) to help your lab prepare on an individual level. Alternatively, you may also schedule a QA visit with Ms. Jennifer Cassaday. Additional details may be found on page 1 of this newsletter.

At the time of the site visit, principal investigators must ensure their laboratory has

- current approvals with the IACUC,
- no deviations from the approved protocol or IACUC policies/ guidelines,
- protocol documentation and records available.

Other preparation tips:

- Ensure all personnel working with animals are 100% knowledgeable about the animal use protocol and they know how to access the current, approved version.
- Drugs, chemicals, and supplies used in or on live animals must be within the expiration date and stored properly.
- If controlled substances are used, be prepared to discuss how security is maintained and records are kept.
 - [EHS Controlled Substance Policy](#)
- Remove clutter to demonstrate a well-kept animal use area. First impressions are important!
- Be familiar with the [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#). This is the primary reference document the site visitors use to evaluate our program.
- Be familiar with [UT Austin's policies and guidelines](#). These documents describe IACUC requirements and guidance for animal use.

Potential questions from site visitors

"Are you enrolled in the Occupational Health Program?"

All individuals involved with animal work at UT Austin must complete a [HealthPoint OHP Health Assessment Questionnaire](#) prior to starting work. This enrolls them in the OHP at UT Austin.

"Where do you go for treatment if you are injured by an animal?"

For emergency work-related injuries, call **911** and ask to be transported to the nearest hospital. If the injury involves an animal, chemical, or biological exposure, request transport to a St. David's affiliated emergency room. If urgent consultation with the HealthPoint OHP program is needed, call **471-4OHP (4647)** and press 1 to be connected with an on-call nurse. You should clean bites and scratches ASAP to reduce chance of infection. Primate rooms have bite/scratch kits available. Contact OHP for direction after initial treatment.

"How do you consult a veterinarian for assistance?"

Contact information for Dr. Glen Otto (Attending Veterinarian) and Dr. Laura Wilding (Senior Clinical Veterinarian) may be found in the [UT Directory](#). The ARC vet staff pager number is **(512) 210-2107** and the general email is vetstaff@austin.utexas.edu.

"What do you do if you find a sick or moribund animal?"

Veterinary staff should be contacted if an animal is sick or if it exhibits any signs of pain that are not relieved by analgesic administration approved on the animal use protocol. All laboratory personnel must be properly trained on humane endpoints described in the protocol. Moribund animals must be humanely euthanized by trained personnel. Remember: Clinical care must be coordinated through the ARC vets. Any treatments not listed on your protocol must have vet approval.

"How do you report animal welfare concerns?"

Informational sheets ("[whistleblower posters](#)") must be posted in all animal facilities and laboratory spaces where animals are used. Contact the IACUC if you do not see one in your area.



The image shows three informational posters. The first poster, titled "How to report concerns about animal use in research, teaching, or testing", provides information on reporting animal welfare concerns, including contact information for the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and the University Compliance Services. The second poster, titled "HealthPoint Occupational Health Program", provides information on the Occupational Health Program, including contact information for the HealthPoint OHP and the University Compliance Services. The third poster, titled "Environmental Health & Safety", provides information on environmental health and safety, including contact information for the Environmental Health & Safety department.

"May I see your surgical records?"

Have your records available for review and ensure they are complete and accurate. See the next page of this document for FAQ's about what details need to be documented within records.

If you perform surgery, be prepared to explain:

- How asepsis is maintained, including proper surgical attire, animal preparation, and sterilization of equipment.
- Anesthesia and analgesia per protocol.
- How animals are monitored throughout surgery.
- How animals are monitored after surgery.

Surgical and post-operative record-keeping 101

AAALAC site visitors heavily focused on record-keeping during the 2018 site visit, and since then, the IACUC has published more detailed guidance and requirements regarding the documentation of anesthesia, surgery, and post-operative monitoring. Below are FAQ's for maintaining records per IACUC requirements (also review the [Guidelines for Surgical and Anesthetic Procedures in Non-Rodent Mammals](#) and [Guidelines for Surgical and Anesthetic Procedures in Rodents, Birds, and Cold-Blooded Vertebrates](#)).

Q: What information must be captured in my surgical and post-operative records?

A: The surgical and post-operative care records must include all steps outlined in the approved animal use protocol (AUP). Additional recording requirements may be needed depending on the species, but at a minimum, records must contain the following information:

- Date of procedure
- Principal investigator
- Protocol number
- Animal ID
- Species
- Procedure title (as titled in AUP)
- Anesthetic, analgesic, or tranquilizing agents used in accordance with the AUP
 - Including dose, concentration, and volume administered is best practice for confirming appropriate analgesic administration
- Frequency of monitoring conducted by lab staff in accordance with the AUP
- Date each entry was made and initials of the individual making the entry



Q: How can I ensure my surgical and post-operative records contain all of the necessary information?

A: The Animal Resources Center (ARC) has provided researchers with [species-specific record templates](#) that may be used. These records specifically request the required information. Personnel involved in these procedures must be familiar with the requirements described in their approved AUP in order to accurately complete the records. If you have questions about how to use these templates or if the templates cannot be used, then the [Assistant Director of Animal Research QA](#) is available to work with your lab on an individual basis and assist in the customization of records based on your lab's needs.

**Your participation
and dedication are
essential for the
success of UT
Austin's animal care
and use program.**

**If you have any questions
about the AAALAC site visit,
please contact
IACUC@austin.utexas.edu.**

