



Canadian Council on Animal Care
STRATEGIC PLAN

2021/2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) would like to take this opportunity to thank our member organizations for providing their valuable input to the *CCAC Strategic Plan 2021-2026*. We are grateful to our funders, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, for their support.

Member Organizations

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Association of Canadian Faculties of Agriculture
and Veterinary Medicine
Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry
Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada
Canadian Association for Laboratory
Animal Medicine
Canadian Association for Laboratory
Animal Science
Canadian Bioethics Society
Canadian Cancer Society
Canadian Council of Departments of Psychology
Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution
Canadian Society of Zoologists
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
Defence Research and Development Canada
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Health Canada
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
Humane Canada™
Innovative Medicines Canada
National Research Council of Canada
Universities Canada

Granting Agencies

Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

Stakeholder Groups

We would like to thank all stakeholders that provided feedback throughout the consultation process.

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Message from the Chair

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) is proud to present its 2021-2026 strategic plan, outlining new goals and activities that will engage its community and highlight the CCAC's critical role in setting and overseeing robust standards across the country for the ethical care and use of animals in science. This strategic plan is the culmination of a consultation process that began in the fall of 2018 and included positive engagement with CCAC stakeholders through strategic planning sessions and surveys, as well as an assessment of the CCAC's previous objectives and the current scientific environment.

The Canadian people count on the CCAC to ensure that animal-based science is ethical, and that the animals in the studies receive optimal care according to high quality, evidence-informed standards. Over the last five years, the CCAC has implemented numerous changes to its processes, standards, communications, and financial practices. The success of these changes will serve the organization well as it forges ahead on its path of continuous improvement in the ethical care and use of animals in Canadian science. In this strategic plan, the CCAC outlines how it will continue to warrant the public's trust and deliver its programs responsibly and sustainably while leading the way in the ethical treatment of animals.

Sudden shifts in the scientific landscape have the potential to greatly affect the animal-based activities of certified institutions. The CCAC experienced this recently with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented health emergency will undoubtedly have lasting implications on scientific animal-based activities in Canada and around the world. The CCAC is committed to establishing the necessary processes to move forward nimbly, safely, and ethically while prioritizing the welfare of animals involved in science.

The CCAC's success in undertaking such challenges depends on the collective efforts of its stakeholders and volunteers. Their feedback during the creation of this plan provided a more complete view of the CCAC's needs and priorities, which assisted the CCAC Board of Directors in identifying four goals that will guide the CCAC over the coming five years. Key to reaching these goals is continual collaboration, communication, and dialogue with the CCAC's extensive community. Working together to enhance the ethical care and use of animals in Canadian science will be the driving force behind the CCAC's success, allowing the organization to move forward into a stronger and clearer future.



Dr. Christopher R.J. Kennedy
Chair, CCAC Board of Directors

Executive Summary

This strategic plan builds on the CCAC's past successes and is a roadmap for furthering practices related to the ethical care and use of animals in research, teaching, and testing throughout Canada. As part of this plan, the CCAC has identified four goals that will guide its activities over the coming five years, along with clear objectives for each goal.



Goal 1

Advance the integration of Three Rs practices – replacement, reduction, refinement – in the ethical care and use of animals

- Enhance reproducibility to increase translation
- Improve experimental design
- Strengthen and enhance partnerships



Goal 2

Ensure a high level of animal care and ethical practices through leading, science-informed standards

- Remain a leader in the ethical care and use of animals
- Enhance impacts of guidelines by supporting adoption and implementation by the scientific community



Goal 3

Adapt the CCAC to an evolving environment

- Support institutions in achieving compliance
- Adapt the program participation structure



Goal 4

Work in partnership with the CCAC community

- Increase engagement and communication
- Diversify training opportunities

The CCAC developed these goals and objectives thanks to feedback from its community and looks forward to collaborating with its stakeholders as it works toward the implementation of the highest standards in the ethical care and use of animals in science.

Introduction

The CCAC offers a unique and truly Canadian approach to the ethical care and use of animals in science. Since 1968, the CCAC has provided the only national oversight of animal-based scientific activities in Canada through a rigorous process of assessment, certification, and standards development. In the absence of a national regulatory framework for animal-based science, the CCAC's programs are some of the most powerful instruments available for setting national standards and ensuring the ethical treatment of animals in Canadian science.

As an integral component of Canada's scientific infrastructure, the CCAC has, since its inception, fulfilled the Government of Canada's national and international responsibility to provide a framework for the ethical care and use of animals in Canadian science. The CCAC plays an essential role in the scientific community by creating and overseeing the ethical animal practices upon which robust and valid scientific findings are built. This structure is also essential to the Canadian people, who, while generally supportive of animal-based science, believe that the welfare and ethical treatment of the animals involved are of the utmost importance.

Through this leadership role, the CCAC also fulfills the Government of Canada's public trust obligations regarding animals in science. This is accomplished with the support of more than 2,000 volunteer experts, serving on more than 190 local animal care committees and other subcommittees and task forces. The CCAC's staff and volunteers are wholly committed to the ethical care and use of animals in science and work diligently to deliver these programs in institutions across Canada.

The only system in the world that delivers guidelines development, assessment, certification, and training through one integrated and interdependent structure, the CCAC sets high standards for the ethical care and use of animals in scientific activities. Internationally, the integrated nature of the CCAC's system is viewed as a respected model because of its ability to adapt rapidly and implement new scientific knowledge and clinical practices that benefit animal welfare. Many countries consult the CCAC and have adopted, or refer to, the CCAC's standards.

The goals and objectives laid out in the *CCAC Strategic Plan 2021-2026* build on the strong foundation created by the CCAC and its volunteer experts over the past 50 years. Accompanying activities will address the changing scientific landscape and ensure that animals in science are used only when necessary, and that when they are, they receive optimal care according to the high-quality, evidence-informed standards that have distinguished the CCAC as the essential service for the ethical care and use of animals in Canadian science.



Our Vision, Mission, and Mandate

Vision

The highest standards of animal ethics and care are valued and assured in all animal-based science conducted throughout Canada.

Mission

The CCAC works to ensure that animal-based science in Canada takes place only when necessary and that the animals in the studies receive optimal care according to high-quality, research-informed standards.

Mandate

Acting in the interest of the people of Canada, the CCAC advances animal ethics and care in science by:

- developing science-informed standards that incorporate expert opinion, the values of Canadians, and strategies to reduce the need for, and harm of, animals in science, while promoting their well-being;
- encouraging the implementation of the highest standards of ethics and care for animals in science in collaboration with the animal-care community and scientists across Canada;
- providing assessment and certification programs that empower scientific institutions in achieving high standards of animal ethics and care; and
- providing education, training, and networking opportunities to support individuals, animal care committees, and institutions in implementing our guidelines and sharing best practices in the oversight of animal ethics and care in science.



Our Principles

Respect for Animal Life

Respect for animal life is the driving force behind all of CCAC's standards development and assessment and certification activities.

Evidence

CCAC standards are based on expert peer advice and current interpretation of scientific evidence.

Transparency

The CCAC operates in a manner that is transparent and fair, and open to public scrutiny.

Partnership

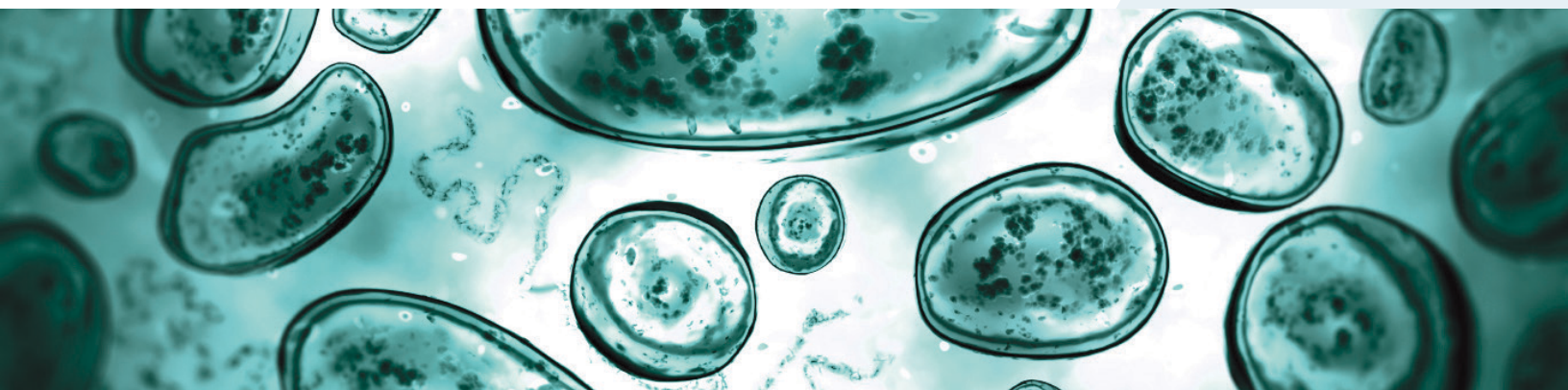
The CCAC works in partnership with its member organizations, program participants, and stakeholders to advance animal ethics and care in science.

Inclusiveness

The CCAC works with all stakeholders, seeking advice and perspectives from peer experts and public representatives to achieve consensus on issues surrounding animal ethics and care in science.

Integrity

The CCAC conducts all activities and affairs with honesty and always acts in accordance with high ethical standards.





Strategic Goals

The CCAC will continue to build upon its three pillars of standards, assessment and certification, and training and networking to ensure the effective implementation of high standards for the ethical care and use of animals in science. As a result of the work done to date, the CCAC has become a champion for ethical, robust, and reliable animal-based science, and is dedicated to continuing its work on these core activities as it looks to the future of animal-based science in Canada.

To continue improving its programs, the CCAC has identified four strategic goals for 2021-2026 that will guide all aspects of the organization's operations for the next five years. These goals were identified after extensive consultation with the [CCAC's membership](#), staff, partner organizations, and [certified institutions](#). Related activities will centre on the key areas of the Three Rs, standards development, increasing program compliance, and improving stakeholder training and engagement.



Advance the Integration of Three Rs Practices in the Ethical Care and Use of Animals

The CCAC was one of the first oversight bodies in the world to promote the implementation of the Three Rs in its guidelines, policies, and recommendations. Over the years, it has had great success in integrating the principle of refinement into its standards; however, full implementation of the Three Rs requires the collaboration of many stakeholders within the scientific community. While there are elements relating to the Three Rs that can be directly influenced by the CCAC, other aspects fall within the domains of funders, institutions, educators, and scientists themselves, and must be tackled collaboratively.



Ensure a High Level of Animal Care and Ethical Practices Through Leading, Science-Informed Standards

Over the course of its last strategic plan, the CCAC developed a number of [new guidelines](#) according to its prioritization matrix, which is based on relevance, timeliness, ethics, and changes in the use of particular types of animals. The organization is also committed to ensuring that these standards remain current with the latest research and will be reviewed on a regular basis. However, despite this comprehensive collection of standards, there exists a level of unfamiliarity within the scientific community as to the impact that these guidelines, and ethical scientific activities in general, have on outcomes. The CCAC will continue to develop strong standards based on the ethical care and use of animals while working with stakeholders to stress the importance of these guidelines.



Adapt the CCAC to an Evolving Environment

Over the last several years, the nature of research collaborations between multiple partners within the scientific community has begun to evolve. The CCAC's program participation structure must adapt to meet the requirements and challenges of new endeavours, research collectives, and partnerships. The CCAC must also identify existing gaps and challenges within its own programs to facilitate [program participation](#) while continuing to prioritize the ethical treatment of animals.



Work in Partnership with the CCAC Community

A number of emerging societal trends have begun to change the way in which organizations communicate with their stakeholders. Due in significant part to the growth of social media and digital communications, audiences expect instant communication and resolution, increased access to information, and greater consistency and transparency. The CCAC must therefore respond to this evolving landscape to create multi-directional communication and [training](#) channels to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and receive the necessary guidance to provide the best ethical care for animals in science.



GOAL ONE

Advance the Integration of Three Rs Practices – Replacement, Reduction, Refinement – in the Ethical Care and Use of Animals

Introduction

In a recent public poll commissioned by the CCAC, nine in ten Canadians said the welfare of animals in science is essential when deciding whether to include them in a study. The Three Rs tenet (replacement, reduction, and refinement) is foundational to the CCAC's programs, which promote ethical scientific activities through the implementation of Three Rs strategies.

While the CCAC has typically focused on the principle of refinement, it will examine where in the scientific cycle improvements can be made to stimulate the implementation of all Three Rs. Emphasis will be placed on improving experimental design and enhancing reproducibility, which have been identified as significant shortcomings of animal-based science. To achieve a thorough analysis of the practices that have an impact on reproducibility and address the gaps in animal-based science, the CCAC will also form stronger partnerships with Three Rs-focused organizations, groups, and individuals across the country and around the world.

Our Objectives

- 1 Enhance Reproducibility to Increase Translation
- 2 Improve Experimental Design
- 3 Enhance and Strengthen Partnerships



Meeting Our Goal

1

OBJECTIVE ONE

Enhance Reproducibility to Increase Translation

When research studies are poorly designed, conducted, or reported, they may fail to contribute to the research record. In the event these studies are published, they very often cannot be reproduced and thus do not translate into useful outcomes. In either case, animals have been harmed unnecessarily. The CCAC aims to better understand the opportunities and obstacles to improving reproducibility, thereby enhancing research quality and implementing the principle of reduction.

Implementation

- ✓ Analyze opportunities and impediments to improving reproducibility in the Canadian research context with a view to prioritizing actions

2

OBJECTIVE TWO

Improve Experimental Design

The CCAC aims to understand how Three Rs strategies can be better incorporated into experimental design and will increase awareness within the scientific community of the need to include the Three Rs during this process. Providing support for the understanding of, and improvements in, experimental design will be essential to the success of this goal.

Implementation

- ✓ Conduct a gap analysis among certified institutions to identify areas for improvement
- ✓ Develop support and training materials for protocol authors and animal care committees
- ✓ Disseminate information about the importance of good experimental design, and provide best practices and access to useful tools

3

OBJECTIVE THREE

Enhance and Strengthen Partnerships

The success of this goal is based on collaboration and partnerships with national and international Three Rs-focused individuals, groups, and organizations that will facilitate the exchange of best practices and strengthen the CCAC's reputation as a leader in the implementation of the Three Rs.

Implementation

- ✓ Identify and collaborate with stakeholders working on the advancement of the Three Rs
- ✓ Support community efforts to implement the Three Rs and disseminate information
- ✓ Integrate the results of these initiatives into CCAC practices, standards, and other activities



GOAL TWO

Ensure a High Level of
Animal Care and Ethical
Practices Through Leading,
Science-Informed Standards

Introduction

Central to the CCAC's commitment to the ethical care and use of animal in science are policies and expert-reviewed guidelines. These standards incorporate expert peer advice, the values of Canadians, and strategies to reduce the need for, and harm of, animals in science, while promoting their wellbeing.

The CCAC is dedicated to updating these standards regularly so that they are world class, timely, relevant, and incorporate the latest Three Rs practices, through a continuous process of review and revision by volunteer experts.

Our Objectives

1

Remain a Leader in the
Ethical Care and Use of
Animals

2

Enhance the Impact
of Guidelines by
Supporting Adoption and
Implementation by the
Scientific Community



Meeting Our Goal

1

OBJECTIVE ONE

Remain a Leader in the Ethical Care and Use of Animals

Following the intensive development phase of a new guidelines document, the CCAC will implement a robust maintenance cycle to incorporate changes in legislation, regulations, international standards, Three Rs practices, and current interpretation of scientific evidence. The CCAC will also continue to keep abreast of emerging scientific animal-based activities and flag the need for new guidelines when required.

Implementation

- ✓ Maintain an optimal carrying capacity for the development/maintenance of guidelines
- ✓ Establish priorities with the CCAC community using an up-to-date decision matrix
- ✓ Continue gathering data on development and maintenance processes, and seek areas for increased efficiencies

2

OBJECTIVE TWO

Enhance the Impact of Guidelines by Supporting Adoption and Implementation by the Scientific Community

The CCAC performs an essential national service ensuring the ethical treatment of animals in science, yet many individuals within the scientific community remain unfamiliar with the organization, its role, and its standards. Over the coming years, the CCAC will work with the community to generate a greater awareness of the importance and impact of its guidelines and policies, and how improved ethical animal practices support improved animal-based science. Implementation strategies will also be created to facilitate their application in a practical setting.

Implementation

- ✓ Communicate relevant information in relation to new standards
- ✓ Support program participants with training materials and learning objectives related to specific guidelines
- ✓ Develop implementation and communication strategies that ensure new standards have a positive effect on the ethical care and use of animals



GOAL THREE

Adapt the CCAC to an
Evolving Environment

Introduction

As a proactive and responsible body, the CCAC must keep pace with the ever-changing scientific environment to ensure that its standards and processes continue to contribute to high levels of ethical practices in the care and use of animals, while minimizing unnecessary and ineffective requirements for certified institutions. Unforeseen events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can have a serious impact on the animal-based scientific activities in certified institutions. The CCAC will work to refine and adapt its internal processes to ensure that it is responsive to certified institutions, while prioritizing the welfare and ethical use of animals.

The CCAC will also reach out to non-traditional groups and entities conducting animal-based science throughout Canada to encourage program participation and the implementation of the CCAC's high standards of ethical practices in the care and use of animals within their scientific activities.

Our Objectives

1

Support Institutions in
Achieving Compliance

2

Adapt the Program
Participation Structure



Meeting Our Goal

1

OBJECTIVE ONE

Support Institutions in Achieving Compliance

Understanding the challenges faced by certified institutions in maintaining compliance with the CCAC's standards is an important element of this objective. The CCAC will continue to refine program requirements related to animal-based activities within certified institutions while keeping ethics and welfare top of mind.

Implementation

- ✓ Consult regularly with program participants
- ✓ Analyze how technology could support this objective
- ✓ Explore initiatives that reduce administrative burden and cost of compliance and implement those that do not compromise the welfare of animals in science

2

OBJECTIVE TWO

Adapt the Program Participation Structure

The CCAC's aim is to ensure the welfare of all animals used in scientific activities throughout Canada. To keep pace with today's evolving scientific environment, the CCAC will pursue program participation from both traditional and non-traditional organizations involved in animal-based research, teaching, and testing in Canada. The CCAC will also provide guidance and develop requirements related to national and international collaborative research among different types of institutions and organizations.

Implementation

- ✓ Develop a program participation structure that is better adapted to the increasing number of partnerships created by new research funding practices
- ✓ Work with the [granting agencies](#) to ensure that funding recipients conducting animal-based research and teaching obtain a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®
- ✓ Improve communication and collaboration with funders and other organizations to require CCAC certification
- ✓ Develop new CCAC guidance on collaborative research



Introduction

With a commitment to nimbly and effectively respond to changes in the evolving scientific landscape, the CCAC will create multi-directional communication channels to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and receive the necessary training to provide the best care for animals in science. The CCAC is committed to listening to, and taking into account, all voices within its community, including animal care committees, scientists, teachers and learners, animal welfare and ethics professionals, member representatives, partners, and the general public, to ensure that its practices and processes continue to build public trust and contribute to the highest levels of care for animals within scientific activities.

In addition to maintaining the communication and training practices already in place, the CCAC will work to enhance its stakeholders' understanding of the CCAC's essential role in the animal-based scientific environment. This will be done by fostering new and existing partnerships, refining current communication and training activities, and implementing new initiatives that support the CCAC's strategic objectives.

Our Objectives

- 1 Increase Engagement and Communication
- 2 Diversify Training Opportunities



Meeting Our Goal

1

OBJECTIVE ONE

Increase Engagement and Communication

In support of its strategic goals, the CCAC will develop and implement an outreach strategy that will improve communication with its community regarding the creation and implementation of standards and processes, as well as the CCAC's role and value. It will also enhance the general consciousness of Canadians regarding the ethical care of animals in science and respond to related questions.

Implementation

- ✓ Develop and implement a communication plan with targeted initiatives to support the strategic plan's objectives
- ✓ Refine current communication activities
- ✓ Develop and implement a social media strategy to support communication activities

2

OBJECTIVE TWO

Diversify Training Opportunities

To assist institutions in meeting the CCAC's requirements and ensure the highest standards of oversight of animals in research, teaching, and testing, the CCAC will provide tools and training opportunities that facilitate the implementation of its guidelines, policies, and processes, and encourage the sharing of best practices.

Implementation

- ✓ Develop and implement a strategy for delivering online training opportunities
- ✓ Offer regional workshops focused on research, teaching, and testing trends prevalent in that geographical area
- ✓ Provide tailored training services addressing concerns specific to individual certified institutions
- ✓ Expand the national workshop format to include interactive training workshops and sessions

Conclusion

The CCAC is eager and well-prepared to take on this new strategic plan and tackle the outlined goals deftly and decisively. The scientific landscape is shifting rapidly and the CCAC is committed to leading the way by ensuring that the highest standards of animal care and ethical practices are valued and implemented in all animal-based science in Canada.

This strategic plan will prompt a shift within the organization itself, rendering it more agile, responsive, and communicative, all while maintaining its focus on the ethical treatment of animals. Key to this is the refinement of the CCAC's practices, standards, and processes to keep pace with a changing world. This approach, designed specifically for the Canadian scientific landscape, will enable the CCAC to reassure Canadians that their system of oversight of animal-based scientific activities is strong, reliable, responsive, and reflective of their values. Creating better communication between the CCAC and all of its stakeholders will not only create stronger engagement and attract new and non-traditional entities to the CCAC but will also improve animal care and use programs in institutions across Canada.



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