

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEES

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The following is a selection of frequently asked questions (and their respective answers) concerning the *CCAC policy: Terms of reference for animal care committees*.

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1. When should an animal care committee require the submission of a protocol by a researcher / instructor / study director?

All proposed animal-based research, teaching, and testing activities must be clearly described in an animal protocol that must be approved by the institutional animal care committee before any animal-based work can begin. For CCAC's definition of "animal" and for exceptions to the above statement, please refer to the [*Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees.*](#)

2. Who can and can not be a community representative on the animal care committee?

Community representatives come from all walks of life; they can, for example, be members of a humane society, retirees, lawyers, homemakers, business people, teachers, ethicists, or members of the clergy. Community representatives can have any background as long as they have never worked with animals for scientific purposes, are not affiliated¹ in any way with the institution that they will be working with, and do not have any conflict of interest that would compromise their role.

Specifically, the following should not be asked to serve as community representatives:

- current or former employees of the institution;
- someone with a real or perceived conflict of interest (e.g., family member of an animal care committee member, researcher, or senior administrator; someone involved with Board or Senate of an institution, etc.);
- someone who has exceeded eight continuous years of service on an animal care committee; or
- someone (currently or in the past) involved in animal-based research, teaching, or testing (e.g., graduate student working with animals).

Additional information can be found in the [*CCAC-CFHS Manual for Community Representatives.*](#)

3. How should third-party facilities be overseen?

Scientific activities conducted at third-party facilities where the certified institution does not own the animals (e.g., commercial livestock operations, animal shelters, etc.) tend to be less invasive and have lower welfare impacts (e.g., behavioural observations, disease prevalence, nutritional studies, vaccine trials, etc.). As long as these animals remain in use for the approved scientific activity, their ethical treatment falls under the purview of the animal care committee of the CCAC-certified institution conducting the work. Protocol authors, institutional veterinarians, and animal care committees should review and agree to the standards of care that are already in place for these animals prior to their involvement in any scientific activity.

The CCAC expects animal care committees to oversee animal-based work regardless of where the work is undertaken. When feasible, documented annual on-site visits should be conducted by at least two animal care committee members, or delegates, with no real or perceived conflict of interest. A report should be provided

¹ Former undergraduate students are acceptable community representatives as long as they have not pursued further studies or work experience involving animals in research, teaching, or testing.

to the full animal care committee at a subsequent meeting. Third-party facilities should strive to have high animal welfare standards and should, at the very least, meet industry standards (e.g., [National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice](#)). However, the CCAC recognizes that annual site visits are not always realistic for various reasons. When annual site visits cannot be conducted, animal care committees should ensure that appropriate oversight is conducted through post-approval monitoring activities, based on risk to animal welfare. While post-approval monitoring activities do not directly assess the ethical suitability of animal facilities, they allow some flexibility for animal care committees to ensure appropriate oversight of the scientific work.

Some provinces may already have legislation and regulatory requirements for conducting third-party facility visits that exceed those of the CCAC. Institutions are, therefore, responsible for ensuring they are compliant with all relevant regulatory requirements.

Below is a list of situations in which an animal care committee could consider forgoing the annual site visit requirement at third-party facilities participating in animal-based scientific activities described in animal use protocols:

- the third-party facility follows industry standards or meets the requirements of an acceptable external recognized certification program (e.g., [National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice](#), proAction, PigCARE, or other industry, government, or para-government welfare standards). Institutions should maintain a database of these facilities with their locations, the corresponding certification program for each animal species on site, certification dates, and other information as required by the animal care committee. When possible, this information could be collected when farms are recruited for research projects (e.g., at the same time the consent form is filled out);
- a documented virtual remote visit can be conducted;
- there is a compelling scientific requirement in the study design for the recruitment of a facility that does not follow CCAC or any relevant industry standards;
- the study methodology calls for a random selection of participating facilities unknown to the research team and the animal care committee at the time of protocol review;
- the third-party facilities are to be enrolled by a non-institutional professional (e.g., referring veterinarian or agronomist) during the course of their work where research activities would be minor and non-invasive; or
- any other scientifically justified exceptions deemed valid by the animal care committee after a thorough review on a case-by-case basis.

4. What CCAC resources are available to help animal care committees undertake effective and efficient site visits of animal facilities?

The CCAC has published [Guidance for Animal Care Committee Members Conducting Annual Site Visits](#) that includes a sample site visit form that animal care committees can adapt to their facilities.

In addition, listen to the CCAC webinar [ACC Site Visits of Animal Facilities](#) for more detailed information on this subject.

5. What are the CCAC requirements with regard to the pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training?

All animal-based teaching and training activities that require an animal protocol must undergo pedagogical merit review, as described in the [CCAC policy: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training](#).

Additional resources include the [CCAC frequently asked questions: Pedagogical merit of live animal-based teaching and training](#) and a [sample peer review form](#).

6. What are the CCAC requirements with regard to scientific peer review of animal-based research?

Animal-based research must only be undertaken if expert, independent opinion has attested to the probable scientific value of the research within its field. For a research program or project that has been examined through an independent and expert peer-review process (e.g. federal and provincial granting agencies and others), the institutional research administration can choose to accept the results of this review as evidence of scientific merit. In other cases, it is the institution's responsibility to develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that proposed research that will involve animals is independently reviewed for scientific merit by expert peers.

Additional information can be found in the [CCAC policy statement on: scientific merit and ethical review of animal-based research](#) and its accompanying [frequently asked questions](#) document.

7. The CCAC recently published a list of definitions of animal-based activities and identified which activities require an animal use protocol (see the *Requirement for submitting an animal protocol: Addendum to the CCAC policy statement on terms of reference for animal care committees*). What should institutions do to meet CCAC expectations with regard to different animal-based activities?

The responsibility of the institution and the animal care committee will vary with the type of activity:

- **Animal-based community outreach** – non-invasive activities involving animals meant to informally educate the public and for which there is no assessment of understanding or retention of knowledge obtained from the involvement of animals.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** none (no pedagogical merit review)
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** depends on the animals involved:
 - a) none, if no research or teaching animal involved; or
 - b) need to request the submission of an [Oversight of Animal-Based Community Outreach Activities Form](#) if research or teaching animals involved

- **Animal-based research** – any study aimed at the generation of new knowledge² where animals are involved
 - **Institutional responsibility:** scientific peer review
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** review of animal use protocol
- **Animal-based teaching** – activities involving animals that formally educate participants enrolled in a course within a recognized academic curriculum, and for which there is a formal process to assess understanding and retention of knowledge obtained from animal involvement.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** pedagogical merit review
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** review of animal use protocol
- **Animal-based testing** – experimental manipulation of animals with the measurement of defined experimental endpoints, generally for regulatory purposes. Safety testing involves procedures to determine, for example, whether, in what ways, and to what extent a compound is toxic. Efficacy testing involves procedures to determine whether a compound or device will be effective for a given condition. Environmental testing involves actively placing animals under environmental conditions that may impact them.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** regulatory requirements verification
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** review of animal use protocol
- **Animal-based training** – activities involving animals that formally (e.g., directed studies) and informally (e.g., workshops) assist learners in acquiring competency, and for which there is a process to assess competency derived from animal involvement.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** expedited pedagogical merit review
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** review of animal use protocol
- **Display** – keeping animals for personal or public display with no specific educational or research goal.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** none
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** none
- **Monitoring** – monitoring is mostly for regulatory purposes and refers to the measurement of changes in a system over time, for example to detect the spread of disease agents in the wild or assessing parameters at the animal population level. It involves the routine collection of information obtained in a prescribed manner using standardized methods.
 - **Institutional responsibility:** none
 - **Animal care committee responsibility:** none
- **Practicum** – activities related to the supervised practical application of previously or concurrently studied theory, in which students often participate in performing tasks. These activities (e.g., time spent handling animals in an animal shelter, veterinary clinic, or farm beyond formal teaching or training) unlike structured laboratories are not undertaken in direct support of formal learning objectives

2 While research studies may include the examination of already existing data under a new hypothesis, the CCAC does not require the submission of protocols for the secondary use of data.

described in a course outline as part of a formal curriculum. There is generally no formal process to assess the acquisition of skills obtained from animal involvement.

- **Institutional responsibility:** none
- **Animal care committee responsibility:** none

Certified institutions must ensure that research, teaching, and testing animals (within the CCAC mandate) are not adversely affected (e.g., cross-contamination) by animals outside the mandate.

To avoid any animal welfare issues, institutions are encouraged to have a policy, understanding, or agreement in place that sets conditions and expectations for keeping animals in an institution for purposes other than research, teaching, or testing.

8. Why do CCAC-certified institutions subcontract animal-based work to non-certified institutions?

CCAC-certified institutions subcontract animal-based work to non-certified institutions (mainly private companies such as contract research organizations) for various reasons, including:

- lack of appropriate animal facilities;
- lack of appropriate expertise;
- lack of appropriate animal models; and
- prohibitive operational costs.

Examples of subcontracted products include antibodies, vaccines, genetically modified animals, and assay developments. A CCAC-certified institution that is subcontracting products can either:

- use the products internally (e.g., the original request is from their own researchers); or
- act as the supplier (usually at a cost) of the subcontracted products to other institutions, CCAC-certified or not.

9. How can CCAC-certified institutions best manage subcontracted work with a non-certified institution?

Researchers from certified institutions can purchase animal products (e.g., antibodies) or research animals from non-certified institutions. The current CCAC guidance is that institutions should source their products or animals from reputable suppliers ([*CCAC guidelines on: procurement of animals used in science*](#)).

Animal care committee visits to vendors should be conducted when feasible to verify animal care and welfare conditions, husbandry and housing conditions, and availability of veterinary and competent animal care staff. If site visits are not possible, animal care committees must do their due diligence to ensure subcontracted animal-based work is conducted ethically. This can be through virtual tours, questionnaires, other formal processes to gather relevant information, confirmation of certification by other animal welfare certification programs (e.g., AAALAC), etc.

If conditions at a subcontractor's facility do not meet the minimum standards required by the animal care committee, the institution must not use that subcontractor. A process should be implemented (e.g., through procurement) to restrict collaborations, orders, or purchases from these subcontractors.

CCAC-certified institutions selling or supplying animal products or research animals from subcontractors must disclose to end users that they were not produced in a CCAC-certified institution. They should also disclose that the animal-based procedures to obtain the subcontracted products (or the genetically modified animals) were not reviewed and approved by an institutional animal care committee.