CERTIFICATION OF ANIMAL ETHICS AND CARE PROGRAMS

DATE OF REVISION: February 2021

The following is a selection of frequently asked questions (and their respective answers) concerning the *CCAC policy: Certification of animal ethics and care programs*.

1.   How does this policy differ from the previous (January 2016) policy?

There are a number of important changes and additions to the policy:

- the initial CCAC Probationary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® has been replaced with the CCAC Preliminary Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®, which is valid for 18 months;

- major animal welfare incidents must now be reported to the CCAC (consequences for failure to notify the CCAC are outlined in the policy);

- changes have been made to CCAC reporting requirements to the granting agencies (when an institution loses or relinquishes its certificate); and

- the definition of "in good standing" in the policy has been modified to include a valid *Acknowledgement and Consent Form*.

2.   What is the assessment and certification process?

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) assesses and certifies institutional animal ethics and care programs every three years. Assessments take place through either a **regular visit** (conducted by a panel of peers) or an **interim visit** (conducted by an associate director of assessment, who may or may not be accompanied by a peer). Regular and interim visits generally alternate every three years.

Certification involves the review of institutional implementation reports and updates by the assessment panel and the CCAC. Once the information provided by the institution is deemed satisfactory, the institution can receive a CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice®.

Sample agenda and pre-assessment documentation requirements can be found on the CCAC website.

3.   What steps does an institution take to become CCAC certified?

Institutions that would like to apply for CCAC certification should contact the CCAC and follow the instructions outlined in *Helping Canadian Institutions Join the CCAC Program* (CCAC, 2019).

4.   The *CCAC policy: Certification of animal ethics and care programs* now includes a requirement to report major animal welfare incidents to the CCAC within 10 days. Why has this new requirement been added to the policy?

The requirement has been added to the policy because, in the view of the CCAC, reporting:

- is an important element of the CCAC's mandate to oversee animal-based science in certified institutions;

- will help educate institutional personnel and support animal care committees through the sharing of relevant information; and

- will inform the development of CCAC standards.

5.   What constitutes a major animal welfare incident?

A major animal welfare incident refers to an event that leads to the unanticipated death of research, teaching and testing animals, or poses an immediate and significant threat to animal health or welfare. A major incident can refer to a:

- catastrophic failure of critical life support system(s) that leads to the death of research teaching or testing animals, or poses a significant threat to animal health or welfare;

- disregard of, or unintended failure to follow, practices or procedures that leads to the death of research, teaching or testing animals, or poses a significant threat to animal health or welfare;

- significant and unanticipated morbidity or mortality unrelated to the above; or

- serious or continuous noncompliance with CCAC standards that leads to the suspension by the animal care committee or the institution of an animal-based activity that threatens animal health or welfare.

If you are unsure of whether an event should be reported, please contact the CCAC.

The CCAC has developed the *Major Animal Welfare Incident Self-Reporting Form* which should be completed and signed by the animal care committee chair and sent to the CCAC. A copy should also be forwarded to the senior administrator responsible for the animal ethics and care program at the institution.

6.   The policy includes a requirement to provide an account of all incidents reported to the institutional animal care committee since the last CCAC assessment visit in the CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form*. What should this look like?

The CCAC expects to see a list of all incidents reported to the animal care committee since the last CCAC assessment, including the dates of occurrence, the species involved, and a very brief description of the incidents, including the causes. This information should be provided in Section 2, Appendix 2M of the CCAC *Animal Care and Use Program Review Form*.

Assessment panels may ask for more information about particular incidents during the assessment visit; however, panels will mostly ask animal care committees if they have identified trends, and how they are managing them.