CCAC ANIMAL USE DATA OVERVIEW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC)'s mandate to advance ethical animal care and use as well as with the Three Rs principles of replacement, reduction and refinement, the CCAC Board of Directors established the Animal Data Working Group to develop an improved data collection system that meets or exceeds international norms in this area, improve metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of the CCAC's program, and provide appropriate public accountability.

The working group identified two considerations that were fundamental to the CCAC's role as Canada's ethical oversight system for the care and use of animals in science:

- Animals have interests and are therefore deserving of moral consideration
- The CCAC, acting in the interest of the people of Canada and on behalf of the Government of Canada, should provide the public with as much information as possible in the CCAC's annual animal use data report. This includes accurately portraying the state of animal-based science in Canada, explaining the context within which this work takes place, and correcting misinformation as it arises. This will help ensure that the CCAC is seen as transparent, unbiased, and able to be trusted as the national authority overseeing the welfare of animals in science.

Throughout their deliberations, the group examined current processes, compared them with international norms, and suggested improvements for all aspects of the Canadian animal data reporting system. Additionally, the working group produced and analysed a survey that covered: timing of reporting, data management practices, animal reuse, breeding colonies and herds, wildlife, and other general information. They then proposed the following actions to improve all aspects of the Canadian animal data reporting system:

PROPOSED ACTIONS

PROCESS FOR COLLECTING ANIMAL DATA FROM CCAC INSTITUTIONS

The working group noted gaps and inefficiencies in the current reporting system, as well as inconsistencies with the way data was being reported between institutions. The aim of the following actions is to include new measures relevant to animal welfare and streamlining the reporting process. Changes are also suggested to improve the consistency and accuracy of the data.

Actions 1 – 3

1. that data collection and reporting continue on an annual basis
2. that the timing of reporting, within an institution in preparation for collating institutional data for the AUDF, be changed to 'as a protocol expires or is renewed'
3. in the case of cross-institutional collaborations, every animal should be counted, but only once

DATA TO BE COLLECTED AND REPORTED

After reviewing data currently collected and reported, the Animal Data Working Group identified a number of gaps in reporting such as breeding colony numbers (**Action 4**), areas in which criteria were unclear, such as reuse (**Action 5**), or in which refocussing data collection would significantly add to the meaningfulness of the data reported, such as emphasizing impacts to animal welfare (**Action 11**). In proposing changes regarding data reporting, the Animal Data Working Group was very conscious of potential additional burdens on those collecting and reporting data to the CCAC. This included input from experienced members of the group who are involved in data collection at their institutions, discussions with animal care committee members, staff at annual meetings, and a carefully designed survey of researchers, staff, and administrators.

The working group specified that there is a significant amount of animal-related information already included on protocols and renewal forms that is not currently being reported to the CCAC. Many of the following proposed actions relate to information that is already collected by animal care committees. Given appropriate time, institutions should be able to amend their reporting practices to include some of this previously unreported information to the CCAC.

Actions 4 – 14

4. that all animals produced or held in a breeding colony or herd be reported, and that offspring are counted at a pre-established, species-appropriate time
5. that reuse be redefined to mean 'animals that are carried over from a previous year'
6. that each animal's 'place of residence' (i.e. onsite, offsite, in the wild) be identified in the annual data report
7. that international animals continue to be counted and be reported distinctly
8. that wildlife continue to be reported by genus and species when possible (and always for species at risk). In cases where this is not possible, a higher level taxonomic classification can be used
9. that the fate of animals after their involvement in a research, teaching, or testing protocol be denoted
10. that the experience of the animals be used as a focal category in the report, and that this be supplemented with information about the associated procedures, recognizing that there could be variable impacts of specific procedures on particular animals
11. that the category of welfare impact be reported retrospectively
12. that when different animals experience different levels of pain and distress within a single protocol, this information be captured by reporting as many categories of welfare impact as are

appropriate. For institutions currently without this capability, that they be encouraged to implemented it when updating their software

13. that the reported level of welfare impact reflect cumulative pain and distress
14. that the source of animals be reported under the following labels: born in captivity for the purposes of research, teaching, or testing; wild animals; other; reused; and possibly 'uncertain'

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL DATA REPORT

The Animal Use Data Working Group discussed ways the information provided in the annual animal use data report could be made more accessible and informative. The following proposed actions aim to help readers understand the data within context.

Actions 15 – 17

15. that trend analyses, accompanied by brief explanations, be included in the annual animal use data reports to help readers understand the data within context
16. that the number and types of institutions be reported in the annual animal data report
17. that the purpose of animal use categories be updated to include distinct categories specifically for human health, veterinary medicine, environmental biology, fundamental biology, food production, and 'other'

FACILITATE AN UPDATED DATA COLLECTION PROCESS FOR THE CCAC

The following proposed actions aim to ensure that the annual animal use data report remains relevant over time. The landscape of animal-based science in Canada is rapidly changing and it will be important that the CCAC track these changes, while also reflecting the changing values of Canadian society.

Actions 18 – 19

18. that the CCAC perform an annual scan of international animal data reports, identifying significant new developments, and evaluating whether those new practices should be emulated in Canada
19. that the CCAC consult with stakeholders periodically to ensure that the annual animal data report continues to serve their needs

It should be noted that members of the working group achieved a high degree of consensus on these proposed actions. In each instance, the group articulated the principles on which the action is based, as well as detailed information about implementation for particular areas of research and different types of institutions.

BENEFITS OF PROVIDING ANIMAL USE DATA TO STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders with interests in the annual animal use data reports are diverse and represent all facets of the Canadian population concerned about animal use in research, teaching, and testing. The working group identified three groups of key stakeholders: the Canadian public, CCAC-certified institutions, and the CCAC itself. It is important to consider that the mandates and interests of

these groups are varied and therefore the annual animal data report must consider the needs of all groups to be comprehensive and useful to everyone.

Further, the capture and reporting of animal use data needs to accommodate how both scientific and stakeholder interests may change over time. Therefore, animal use data reports should enable robust trend analyses and facilitate data mining, while ensuring that emerging trends are not obscured by vague data categories.

THE CANADIAN PUBLIC

Accountability: The public has a legitimate interest in both animal welfare and scientific work involving animals. Moreover, most animal-based research in CCAC-certified institutions is publicly funded, and the public has a right to know how the institutions it supports (and their scientists) are progressing with the implementation of the Three Rs principles and other relevant animal welfare standards. Annual animal use data reports provide important information and assurances about the use of animals in science.

Transparency: This is essential for accountability to Canadians. Ensuring that all animals involved in science-based activities at CCAC-certified institutions are accounted for helps prevent significant information from being concealed. Part of this is achieved by providing data in addition to summary reports, thereby allowing users to examine the data according to their own needs.

Inclusivity: Currently, the publication of the animal use data is the main method for disseminating information about animal use in CCAC-certified institutions to the Canadian public. The animal use data therefore provides a foundation for informed public feedback on guidelines when they are released for widespread review.

Comparability: Where possible, Canadian data should be comparable to data from other countries. However, caution needs to be used due to the differences in funding and research priorities, differences in data collection methodologies, and federal regulations.

CCAC-CERTIFIED INSTITUTIONS

Better Animal Welfare: Improved data collection supports better animal welfare by helping institutions understand procedure types and use categories, identify opportunities to apply the Three Rs more effectively, track animal welfare outcomes, and enhance overall animal experience.

Stronger institutional animal care and use programs: Collecting and streamlining institutional animal use data improves accuracy and reliability, supports more informed and timely decision-making, and identifies trends and gaps.

Benchmarking: Informative annual reports allow institutions to benchmark their performance in ethical animal care and use with those of their peers. Also, compiling the data for annual reports provides a mechanism for internal accountability and improved accuracy.

Aiding research and teaching: Some academics may use national data for their research or publications, or during course instruction (e.g., animal welfare research and courses, academics teaching courses on ethics, etc.).

THE CCAC PROGRAM

Prioritizing guideline development: The CCAC can use the animal data to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement, as well as help determine which guidelines should be prioritized for renewal according to animal numbers and categories of welfare impact.

Informing assessment visits: The annual trends will inform the CCAC's assessment process to focus on certain protocols or visit certain animals during assessment visits.

Providing a performance measure for Three Rs and other standards: Currently, the compiled data report provides no means of evaluating progress towards the Three Rs. However, it may be possible in the future for the CCAC to mine the animal use data for more specific information regarding the success of guidelines implementation and other future initiatives.

Demonstrating the Importance of the CCAC: The data demonstrates the magnitude of animal-based science in Canada and therefore why the CCAC's system of oversight is an integral part of the national scientific ecosystem

CONCLUSION

The CCAC acknowledges that this transition represents a significant change for certified institutions, and we sincerely thank you for your continued commitment to supporting the successful implementation of the new system and the advancement of animal welfare in science. The benefits of this initiative are substantial, and the CCAC is committed to supporting you through the transition. We appreciate your dedication and encourage you to contact us with any questions or concerns.