

NIEHS gets enthusiastic thumbs up for lab animal care

By Eddy Ball

This November marked a milestone for the laboratory animal program at NIEHS with an exemplary recommendation by reviewers from its accrediting association.

Every three years, the NIEHS animal care and use program must undergo a rigorous re-evaluation by the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC).

(<http://www.aaalac.org/>)

The review ensures that the program's use of animals follows all regulations and guidelines, and maintains the highest standards of humane care possible.

"I am pleased to announce that the site visitors will recommend that the AAALAC Council place our institution at the 'exemplary' status, a level of commendation given to only a handful of the more than 900 programs they accredit across the globe," explained NIEHS Scientific Director Darryl Zeldin, M.D., in his Nov. 19 announcement. "In addition, we experienced the very rare event of having the site visitors offer up no suggestions for improvement, a feat that is truly remarkable."

"Quality animal care ensures quality animal-based science," Zeldin said. "We are very fortunate to have a team that provides, and a culture that supports, this mission."

It takes a village

Preparation for the triennial evaluation requires an extensive amount of time and effort by NIEHS staff, the bulk of which takes place long before the two-day site visit by AAALAC representatives.

Groups involved include the Comparative Medicine Branch (CMB), the Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC), animal research-related components of the Health and Safety Branch in the Office of Management (OM), and the Office of Research Facilities, as well as support provided by the Operations and Security Branch in OM, and the scientists from the in-house research labs in the Division of Intramural Research and the Division of the National Toxicology Program (see [text box](#)).

"I would especially like to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of the CMB team led by Kathy Laber, D.V.M., and her deputy, Mary Grant, V.M.D.," Zeldin said.

The AAALAC will announce its official decision regarding NIEHS's ongoing accreditation in the spring of 2015.



According to AAALAC, accreditation benefits an institution and the animals in its care in many ways. Each time a new organization becomes accredited, it helps to raise the global benchmark for animal well-being in science.

Special thanks to members of the teams involved

Along with his congratulations to everyone involved, Zeldin recognized key individuals involved in this accomplishment, including the following:

- ACUC chair John Roberts, Ph.D.
- ACUC coordinator Brooke Rogerson
- Animal Resource Services team led by Program Manager Debbie Gaffney and Contract Project Manager Erica Hayes
- Veterinary Medical Services team led by Terry Blankenship-Paris, D.V.M.
- Quality Assurance Laboratory led by David Kurtz, D.V.M., Ph.D.
- Office of Research Facilities team led by Bill Blair
- Health and Safety Branch team led by Scott Merkel
- Operations and Security Branch team led by Mitch Williams

The Environmental Factor is produced monthly by the [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\)](#)

(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>)

, Office of Communications and Public Liaison. The content is not copyrighted, and it can be reprinted without permission. If you use parts of Environmental Factor in your publication, we ask that you provide us with a copy for our records. We welcome your [comments and suggestions](#). (bruskec@niehs.nih.gov)

This page URL: NIEHS website: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>
Email the Web Manager at webmanager@niehs.nih.gov