

Purpose / Scope

The purpose of this policy is to outline Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and institutional requirements for Animal Care Committee (ACC) site visits to all animal holding and use laboratory areas associated with animal-based science activities identified within ACC-approved Animal Use Protocols.

ACC Site Visits are essential in providing the ACC with a direct connection between area supervisors and animal-based scientists who use these spaces. This opportunity for face-to-face dialogue will assist the ACC in its oversight role of the entire Animal Ethics & Care Program at Western and affiliates.

This opportunity for a subset of ACC members to meet directly with key stakeholders is intended to:

- Enhance the ACC's understanding of the work being undertaken as well as area- and research-specific challenges, e.g., sufficiency of facilities, equipment, human resources, and related operations,
- Consider animal care and welfare implications through on-the-floor observations and discussions,
- Provide an approachable platform to share and receive feedback on the Animal Ethics & Care Program towards ongoing refinement.

Rationale

In its *Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees (2006)*¹, the CCAC outlines requirements for the ACC to regularly visit all areas where animals are held and/or used in animal-based science.

Policy Statements

ACC Site Visit Participation

To visit all spaces where live animals are held and used, each ACC member must actively participate in, or at least volunteer for, a minimum of one site visit per year.

A minimum of three ACC members must participate in every ACC Site Visit, including a site visit leader, a veterinarian or designate, and one other ACC member.

Area supervisors and invited users of spaces must make themselves, or a knowledgeable designate, available during the in-person walk-through of the area.

ACC Site Visit Structure

ACC Site Visits must be undertaken at a minimum annually to all laboratory spaces where live animals are held and/or used in research or teaching.

ACC Site Visits must be announced and organized in advance of each visit to ensure availability of related stakeholders, as applicable.

Excluding exceptional circumstances, ACC Site Visits will take place in-person.

¹ Canadian Council on Animal Care. Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees (2006). Retrieved on 24Sep2020 from https://www.ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/Terms_of_reference_for_ACC.pdf

- The ACC Chair will approve exceptions requiring virtual visits.

During ACC Site Visits, as an important part in fulfilling the ACC’s AECF oversight role, participants will:

- Observe the space and assess sufficiency (physical characteristics, environment, etc.).
- Seek to understand related operations and assess sufficiency.
- Seek to understand live animal procedures performed within each area as well as the bigger picture of the animal’s overall experience from arrival to endpoint.
- Seek feedback from area supervisors and users on their challenges as well as their suggestions towards further refinement of the Animal Ethics & Care Program (AECF).
- Provide updates to area supervisors and users on new AECF initiatives.

Post-ACC Site Visit

ACC Site Visit Reports must be completed using an ACC Site Visit Report Template (Appendix 2) and distributed as follows:

- Report commendations, observations and recommendations will be forwarded to area supervisors and select users for their review and responses.
- Responses to site visitor recommendations will be included in the final report.
- ACC Site Visit Reports will be forwarded to the ACC Executive for review and follow-up.
 - Report content will include related follow-up actions.
- Closed reports will be forwarded to the full ACC.

Extra-vivarium space re-certification will be facilitated through the annual ACC Site Visit process.

References

Canadian Council on Animal Care. Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees (2006).

Guidance for Animal Care Committee Members Conducting Annual Site Visits (2018).

Revision History

Version	Date	Description of Changes	Author
00	08-10-2020	New stand-alone policy; previously embedded in POL-005 PAM Program	LT
01	09-12-2021	Reformat; update ‘Purpose’ to align with CCAC expectations; update and provide greater detail for the three-pronged approach to site visits.	LT
02	10-19-2023	Refined content to reflect current practices.	LT