A. What is AAALAC International?
Q. The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) International is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through voluntary accreditation and assessment programs.

Q. Why are we AAALAC-accredited?
A. Quality science and proper animal care go hand in hand. The University of Maryland College Park is committed to the highest standards of animal care and use and to animal welfare in science and teaching. AAALAC International accreditation is important because it:
• demonstrates our commitment to providing quality animal care and use to the scientific community and to the public
• enhances confidence in the University’s animal-based research and teaching programs
• helps eliminate variables in research
• encourages performance-based oversight
• enhances research funding opportunities

Q. What is the benefit of AAALAC accreditation?
A. The following are a few of the numerous benefits of earning AAALAC International accreditation:
• It represents quality. Demonstrated commitment to quality and good science facilitates collaboration with research partners.
• It promotes scientific validity. Reliable scientific results in animal-based research depend on superior animal care.
• It provides assurance in a global marketplace. Our standards are harmonized.
• It’s a recruiting tool. Potential employees seek high quality programs for their research.
• It demonstrates accountability. Accreditation publicly conveys our institutional commitment to responsible care and use of animals in science and teaching.
• It provides a confidential peer-review. A team of outside experts provides an in-depth, confidential, on-site evaluation of our animal care and use program
• It stimulates continuous improvement. Earning and maintaining accreditation ensures that we stay aware of, and engaged in, current best practices in animal care and use.

Q. How often does AAALAC visit our program?
A. AAALAC accreditation site visits are conducted every three years, usually in the same trimester of the year.

Q. What can I expect when AAALAC visits?
A. During the AAALAC site visit, the visiting team of laboratory animal science and research professionals will conduct a program documentation review and tour our animal care and use facilities. You may expect the site visitors to ask you about your research, your animal care and use responsibilities, your specific protocol, animal care and use procedures, the
Occupational Health and Safety program, training requirements, or any other relevant aspect of your work. See below for further details on the process.

Q. What resources or standards does AAALAC use when they conduct our site visit?
A. AAALAC International uses various standards to conduct our accreditation assessments:
   • The 8th Edition of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide);
   • The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide);
   • Prevailing standards, statutes and government regulations related to animal care and use for our institution (e.g., Animal Welfare Regulations, PHS Policy).

Q. What does the university expect of me when AAALAC visits?
A. During their site visit, the AAALAC team will perform a walk-through of our animal care and use facilities, including select research labs, to view our program at the working level. In preparation for this facility tour, please ensure that:
   • the physical environment is clean, tidy, and equipment is properly labeled;
   • all records are up to date, including training, animal care and emergency contact information;
   • research activities are consistent with approved protocols;
   • appropriate PPE is being used at all times; and
   • personnel understand the research, protocols, and SOPs associated with their role in the facility/lab.

Note that, while we expect all personnel to have a firm understanding of the work performed in their labs/facilities and any risks/hazards associated with that work, we also understand that not everyone will have knowledge of every aspect.

A perfectly acceptable answer to a question is:
“I don’t know, but the person who does know is…”

Q. What types of organizations are accredited by AAALAC?
A. Any institution using animals for research, teaching or testing is eligible to apply for AAALAC accreditation. There are currently more than 925 accredited programs in 40 countries. Organizations include:
   • universities
   • hospitals
   • government agencies
   • pharmaceutical companies
   • biotechnology companies
   • agricultural research programs
   • nonprofit organizations
   • other research institutions

Q. How does the AAALAC accreditation process work?
A. The AAALAC accreditation process is a multi-step process that involves the University’s animal care and use team and the AAALAC site visit team.
1. The University prepares a comprehensive description (program description; PD) of all aspects of the animal care and use program at UMD.
2. An interdisciplinary AAALAC team reviews the PD and supporting documents.
3. The University and the AAALAC team determine the site visit dates and the University develops a site visit agenda.

4. During the site visit, the AAALAC team conducts an in-brief, reviews the PD to obtain answers to any questions, conducts facility walk-throughs, reviews program documentation, and meets with the IACUC to perform a comprehensive assessment of our animal care and use program.

5. After the walk-through, the site visitors meet in “executive session” to discuss their assessment, key observations and items they want to share with us right away.

6. Following the executive session, the site visitors conduct an exit briefing. They share a list of items that are commendable, suggestions for improvement, and mandatory items for correction, as applicable. All interested members of the animal care and use support team are invited to attend.

7. The University may choose to submit a post-site visit communication to inform AAALAC how they have addressed some or all of the findings and recommendations of the site visitors.

8. The final accreditation decision lies with the AAALAC Council on Accreditation. The final council decision may be Continued Full Accreditation; Conditional Accreditation; Deferred Accreditation; Probation; or to Revoke Accreditation. The University of Maryland College Park animal care and use program has been fully accredited since 2011.

Q. What are the possible outcomes of our site visit?
A. The AAALAC Council on Accreditation meets three times a year to decide on the outcome of accreditation visits conducted during that trimester. The final council decision may be Continued Full Accreditation; Conditional Accreditation; Deferred Accreditation; Probation; or to Revoke Accreditation. The University of Maryland College Park animal care and use program has been fully accredited since 2011.

Q. Is AAALAC a regulatory body?
A. No, AAALAC is not a regulatory body and does not make regulations or set its own standards. Instead, AAALAC relies on Three Primary Standards along with other, widely accepted guidelines. Institutions must also meet all applicable local and national regulations. AAALAC does publish position statements that may serve as supplemental guidelines for situations described in them.

Q. Do we HAVE to be AAALAC accredited?
A. AAALAC International accreditation is a voluntary process. AAALAC offers the only international accreditation for animal care and use programs. The University of Maryland College Park has chosen to attain and maintain AAALAC accreditation as a way to communicate our commitment animal welfare and to excellence in animal care and use.