

DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY (DHA) COMPONENT OVERSIGHT OFFICE ANIMAL CARE AND USE REVIEW OFFICE (ACURO)

ACURO Extramural Site Visit Policy

Applicability: This Policy applies to all institutions conducting Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E) or Training with animals funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) and that fall under the DHA Component Animal Oversight Office, ACURO, directly or via Memoranda of Agreement.

Purpose: To inform extramural programs on the ACURO's site visit procedures and expectations. As the DHA Component Oversight Office, ACURO is mandated to conduct an administrative review of DoD funded animal use protocols and, in specific cases, a site visit may be deemed necessary during this evaluation. During a site visit, ACURO performs a thorough assessment of the funded animal care and use program, ensures the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) performs their duties responsibly, and verifies all DoD funded animal work is being conducted in accordance with the standards outlined in DoD regulations.

References:

1. DoDI 3216.01, "Use of Animals in DoD Conducted and Supported Research and Training," March 20, 2019.
2. DHA-MSR 6025.02, "The Care and Use of Animals in DoD Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation (RDT&E) or Training Programs," September 1, 2022.

Procedures:

1. Following ACURO approval of a DoD funded study, specifically, but not limited to, those involving the use of nonhuman primates, dogs, cats, or marine mammals, and all training using animals to teach human medical or surgical care, a member of the ACURO staff will reach out to the Award Recipient, Protocol Principal Investigator (PI), and research site contacts to arrange a site visit. Timing of the visit will be contingent upon the study schedule established during this communication.
2. Once the site visit is arranged, the research site contacts will receive an email from ACURO containing a DoD Secure Access File Exchange (DoD SAFE) link, a list of required documents to upload two weeks in advance of the site visit, and a copy of the site visit checklist. Documents on the list containing an asterisk (*) do not need to be sent in advance but must be available in hard copy during the visit. If the institution is unable to meet this requirement, you must notify ACURO in writing so that the site visitors can make alternative arrangements. In addition to the requirements above, the following will need to be coordinated with ACURO prior to the site visit:
 - a. Program points of contact (POCs) will ensure that facility entry requirements are communicated to ACURO ahead of the site visit.
 - b. A visit itinerary will be developed through coordination with ACURO and the site POC.

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- c. Critical items to incorporate into the itinerary and prepare for the visit include the following; time allotted for a short and informal in-brief, a quiet space for document review, and time allotted for a formal exit brief with key personnel (e.g. Program Institutional Official).
3. ACURO site visit teams generally consist of one, DoD American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM) board certified veterinarian who will conduct the facility inspection and another member of the ACURO staff who will conduct a programmatic review. The veterinarian will visit all areas of the vivarium and other areas where DoD animals are used or housed, including study and support areas. The program reviewer will evaluate all animal program documentation as it relates to the DoD funded work.
4. Following the visit, a formal report will be sent to the Institutional Official at the research site and DoD funding agency with courtesy copies to award, protocol, and research site contacts. The report will include a memorandum and the completed site visit checklist. Once the formal report is sent to the institution, all documentation previously received will be destroyed.
5. If significant deficiencies are discovered or if there are other areas of significant concern, a corrective action plan may be required. The formal report will outline required actions and documents, as well as a timeline for completion.
6. If a facility has a change in AAALAC accreditation status (including probation) or is notified it is under investigation by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), or an equivalent international authority ACURO must be notified within 5 business days, and a for-cause site visit will be scheduled within 30 days.

Questions: For questions regarding notifications, please contact the ACURO Office Manager by e-mail: usarmy.detrick.medcom-usarmmc.other.acuro@health.mil or phone: (301) 619-6694.