HISTORY: In 1963, the Medical Research Council (MRC) requested that the National Research Council (NRC) establish a Committee to investigate the care and use of experimental animals in Canada. In 1968, according to the Committee's recommendation to create a voluntary control program exercised by scientists in each institution, subject to peer review and committed to implementing the guiding principles of an independent advisory body, the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) was established. The CCAC was incorporated as a non-profit, autonomous and independent body in 1982.

MANDATE: The CCAC is the national peer review agency responsible for setting and maintaining standards for the ethical use and care of animals used in science (research, teaching and testing) throughout Canada.

The purpose of the CCAC is to act in the interests of the people of Canada to ensure that the use of animals, where necessary, for research, teaching and testing employs optimal care according to acceptable scientific standards, and to promote an increased level of knowledge, awareness and sensitivity to relevant ethical principles.

STRUCTURE: Co-funded primarily by this country's two major granting councils, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the CCAC comprises 22 regular member organizations and up to three limited term member organizations, whose representatives include scientists, educators, and delegates from industry and the animal welfare movement.

The keystone to the CCAC Program is the local animal care committee (ACC) set up by each participating institution. Involving public representatives, institutional ACCs are responsible for overseeing all aspects of animal care and use, working with animal users, animal care personnel and institutional administrations.

ACTIVITIES: Assessment and Certification

The CCAC assesses and certifies animal care and use programs of organizations conducting animal-based work in research, teaching, testing or production (of animals or biologics) for scientific purposes. An institution’s animal care and use program is certified based on institutional
compliance with CCAC standards. The CCAC Certificate of GAP – Good Animal Practice® provides evidence that an institution meets the high national standards for the care and use of animals. Participation in the CCAC Program is mandatory for recipients of animal-based research funds from the federal granting Agencies and federal regulatory departments and agencies.

Standards and Guidance

CCAC standards (policy statements and guidelines documents) are developed and revised in response to advances in animal care, current and emerging needs of the research community, and the needs of the CCAC Assessment and Certification Program. CCAC standards are referenced in regulations to relevant legislation in the majority of provinces having legislated in the matter of animal use for scientific purposes.

Three Rs Alternatives

The Three Rs tenet (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) of animal use guides the conduct of ethical science worldwide. The CCAC promotes adherence to the Three Rs tenet through each of its programs. Implementation of Three Rs alternatives methods is encouraged by the activities of the Three Rs Program, in particular through resources provided on the Three Rs Microsite. See http://threers.ccac.ca/en/alternatives/.

Education and Training

The CCAC develops and makes available educational and reference materials to support the training needs of all personnel involved with the ethical use of animals in science. These resources include online training modules for animal users and a variety of educational workshops and web-based seminars relevant to ACC members and animal health professionals.

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October 2011