Integrated Communications Session – Animal User

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My background

- A biologist – certain 'characteristics' – diversity and evolution, model species, environmental characteristics, knowledge of animals
- Operated a relatively large research program; tools include, *the animal*, physiology, biochemistry/molecular biology, toxicology, multiple aquatic species – complex protocols?
- uOttawa ACC and Steering Committee, CCAC Council + Committees, AACC (Assessment & Certification Committee), site visits, etc.

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Researcher perspective

- uOttawa Animal Care program
  - 'full service' or 'comprehensive' university
  - Medical Faculty + research institutes/schools + Faculty of Science and School of Psychology
  - Split between 2 campuses (5 km but ---)
  - ACVS located at Medical/Hospital campus - discontinuity
- Must caterer to a broad group of researchers with vastly different perspectives on their use of animals – typical?
- My experience – lab animal facility guidelines /requirements relatively rigid; protocols, anaesthesia, analgesia, endpoints - not always well defined; lines of communication relatively well structured (really?); significant disruptions over the last years

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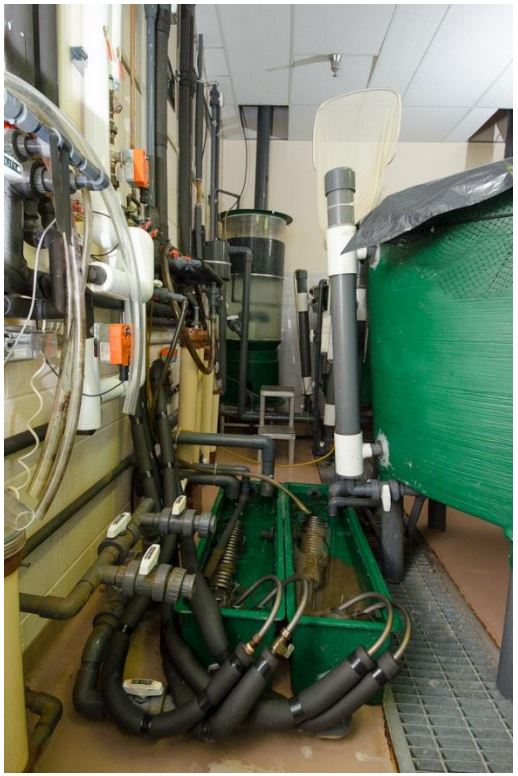
Largest obstacles

- Efforts of veterinarians and ACCs based on traditional animal models – 'medical'
- Different objectives – 'real' vs 'artificial' environments (abiotic and biotic) – place animal into its 'real' environment
- Complexities of animal holding – aquatic and non-traditional terrestrial species (see next)
- 'Safeguards' being imposed from outside rather than from peers – from 'left-field'?
  - increased scrutiny
  - e.g. Canadian Food Inspection Agency (zebrafish); anesthetics

Organized chaos?



Photos by A. Morin

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‘Best’ practices - I

- Require veterinarians and ACC have appropriate information/reference base – including membership on ACCs
- More training in non-traditional species – individual and group activities – list serves, courses, visit adjacent facilities
- Increased ‘sensitivities’ to all animal groups
- Must ‘listen’ to researcher – may be the expert? user group representation?
- Researchers will not know/understand latest requirements imposed from outside

'Best' practices - II

- Animal use protocol forms
  - One-size does not fit all – appropriate forms
  - On-going discussions with major researcher groups
  - Researchers should expect questions – protocols need to use clear language?
- PAM – straightforward for some groups?
  - Again one-size does not fit all - flexibility
  - Field studies – video, travel?
- SOPs – especially for facility operations (videos?), but also for animal acquisition, standard procedures

Summary

- Safeguards developed through CCAC guidelines are effective, peer 'imposed'
- New 'safeguards' - imposed from outside based upon limited 'animal' knowledge
- Use of non-traditional animals in science and teaching is rapidly expanding
- In some large animal care programs the use of non-traditional animals may become marginalized
- Communications between groups is essential to establish 'best practices' and ensure animal welfare and good scientific outcomes

Where do we go now?

- Need opened lines of communication so changes from outside (CCAC assessment reports; fed/prov agencies) can be acted upon in a timely fashion – issue of fiscal constraints
- Re-focussing of efforts especially within the ACCs and the animal care programs to address needs of non-traditional animal users – training, facilities, forms, representation
- Develop networks/avenues for individuals and groups to train in areas not generally covered by a program
- Exchange or posting of appropriate animal use forms for non-traditional species
- Need to remember that possibly the researcher 'knows' more about the animal than those imposing guidelines or reviewing the animal care documentation