

PAACO Standards for Certification of Animal Welfare Audits: Instrument & Guidelines		<i>Approved By:</i> PAACO Executive Director and Board of Directors	<i>Document Number:</i> PAACO 100
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1.0 PURPOSE

The mission of the Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO) is to advance animal welfare through the training of auditors and certification of animal welfare audits. To accomplish this, the Board of Directors has created a set of standards which are used during the audit certification process to ensure the audit and its associated materials meet PAACO's requirements.

The process for reviewing audits is outlined in the PAACO 200 Procedure for Audit Certification which uses this process with a third-party panel of experts followed by the review and approval of the PAACO Board of Directors.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

A. **Animal Welfare Programs:** Documents and systems that aim to provide guidance, educational materials, and/or standards.

B. **Animal Welfare Assessments:** Documents and systems that compare observations to a welfare program to gather information for educational or improvement purposes.

C. **Animal Welfare Audit:** Documents and systems that assess conformance to a set of criteria/standards. An audit is a planned and documented activity performed by qualified personnel to determine by evaluation of objective evidence, the adequacy and compliance with established procedures, or applicable documents, and the effectiveness of implementation. **There are several types or levels of audits as outlined in the definitions adapted from ASQ:**

1. A **first-party audit** or internal audit is performed within an organization to measure its strengths and weaknesses against its own procedures or methods and/or against external standards adopted by (voluntary) or imposed on (mandatory) the organization.
2. A **second-party audit** is an external audit performed on a supplier by a customer. Second-party audits are generally more formal than first-party audits because audit results could influence the customer's purchasing decisions.
3. A **third-party audit** is performed by an audit organization independent of the customer-supplier relationship and is free of any conflict of interest. Independence of the audit organization is a key component of a third-party audit. Third-party audits may result in certification or registration.

D. **Audit Instrument/Tool/Checklist:** The document with criteria and standards that are assessed during the audit which is completed by a qualified auditor to collect data on the welfare of animals.

E. **Audit Guidelines:** A document or description that supports the audit instrument to provide additional description and detail about how to assess the criteria and standards.

F. **Criterion/Criteria:** What is being measured during an audit.

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G. Standard/Benchmark: The target or measurement of acceptability required to meet the criteria.

H. Qualified Auditor: An auditor is qualified by an independent body based on education, training and experience. If PAACO certification of the auditor is not available, a qualified auditor should have appropriate education, experience and/or training, or an alternatively approved certification as defined by the audit author.

3.0 PAACO MINIMUM AUDIT INSTRUMENT CRITERIA

A. Audit Structure, Design, and Process

1. The audit may be comprised of the audit tool, guidelines and supporting documents. These must be aligned with one another, preferably using as few documents as possible, and should be clear, concise, and easy to follow for both the auditor and the auditee.
 - a. The audit tool/instrument must be adequately developed to measure all the criteria included.
 - b. Guidance material, instructions, and appendices provide appropriate direction to auditors and should facilitate use. Guidance or supporting material should match the audit instrument.
2. The scope of the audit must be identified with sampling methodology to ensure it is representative of the full operation.
 - a. All segments of the operation must be evaluated (e.g. all phases of production/processing, hospital pens, cull pens, downer pens, treatment pens etc.).
 - b. The sampling plan makes an effort to minimize bias in measurements by using appropriate sampling practices. (e.g. randomization addressing seasonal and geographical differences where appropriate, risk-based differences).
3. The audit must have good breadth and valid, measurable outcomes that reflect current animal welfare science.
4. The audit must include a list of the criteria as well as an established standard for each criterion. These standards must be clearly defined (i.e. specific and measurable).
5. The list of criteria and established standards must be evaluated by a numerical score; yes/no; or pass/fail to demonstrate conformance/nonconformance. An audit may use a single evaluation approach (e.g. points or yes/no), or a combination (e.g. critical items are pass/fail and other items are scored by points).
 - o Note: it is not a requirement that an audit has a cumulative score.

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6. Critical criteria resulting in audit failures:
 - a. Audits must identify those criteria for which there is zero tolerance and a mechanism for reporting these. These must include:
 - willful acts of abuse and/or neglect
 - failure to euthanize on a timely basis
 - b. Identifying or stating which measurable outcomes result in failure and/or non-conformance.
7. The audit must be conducted by a qualified animal welfare auditor, as defined by the audit author.
8. Although PAACO fully supports audits that evaluate several criteria within the same instrument such as food safety, sustainability etc., the following exceptions apply:
 - a. PAACO's Audit Standards apply only to the animal welfare criteria of an audit,
 - b. For comprehensive audits that include multiple topics/audit criteria, there must be a clear separation between production and/or marketing criteria and animal welfare criteria in the audit tool and program.

B. Animal Outcome and Handling Based Measures

The audit must include criteria and standards for the direct inspection of animals by the auditor(s) for the following areas:

1. Animal-based measurements which are specific for each species/industry segment, which at a minimum includes:
 - a. measurement of lesions and/or injuries
 - b. as well as evaluation of non-ambulatory and compromised animals
2. Handling practices including equipment considerations and personnel.
3. Euthanasia practices must be monitored by the facility, and opportunistically by the auditor, if it occurs while conducting the audit.

C. Facility measures

The audit must include criteria and standards for the direct inspection of the animal's environment by the auditor(s) and include:

1. Capacity to provide animals with effective protection from extreme environmental conditions (extreme ambient temperature, wind, solar radiation, rain, snow, etc.) appropriate to the system and geographic location.
2. Confirmation of access to water and feed.
3. Criteria for the evaluation of the quality of the housing, holding areas, and animal movement areas such as chutes and alleys.

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D. Documentation

The audit must include criteria and standards for the direct inspection of written records, policies, and procedures by the auditor. These must include, but are not limited to:

1. A description of the type and frequency of observations appropriate to the animal.
2. A program which demonstrates a culture of animal care which includes
 - a. A commitment to animal welfare by management or personnel,
 - b. Documentation of ongoing personnel training for animal welfare, and
 - c. Internal assessments or audits including a plan for corrective actions
3. Euthanasia plan that requires timely and effective euthanasia and includes methods consistent with the current version of the AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals and/or other recognized international or national standards.
4. Animal health plan that includes:
 - a. Demonstration of veterinary oversight; typically, evidence of a veterinary/client/patient relationship (VCPR),
 - b. A description detailing the prevention and detection of relevant diseases and treatment of sick animals, and
 - c. Biosecurity plan – a description of the facility management practices to prevent disease introduction and spread relevant to the type of facility being audited.
5. Management of the animal environment such as temperature, air quality, etc.
6. A readily accessible emergency response plan including written emergency contact information, appropriate to the system, to reduce the likelihood of and address the effects of catastrophic events.
7. The audit requires documentation of injuries, treatment/morbidity, mortality, and euthanasia.
8. Management of animal care standards such as feed provision, water accessibility, etc. as appropriate for the species and environment where the audit is occurring.

4.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

PAACO 200. AUDIT CERTIFICATION POLICY
AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals