

# United States Department of Agriculture Facility Inspection for Exotic Veterinarians



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## KEYWORDS

- USDA • APHIS • AWA • Accredited • Accreditation • Facility inspection
- Attending veterinarian • Program of veterinary care

## KEY POINTS

- The attending veterinarian must be accredited.
- The attending veterinarian must have a formal arrangement with the facility.
- The Program of Veterinary Care is created by the attending veterinarian.
- Research facilities will require participation in the Institutional Care and Use Committee.

## INTRODUCTION

Under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), facilities that are licensed by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) must have a relationship established with a veterinarian.<sup>1</sup> This relationship may be as a full, part, or contract Attending Veterinarian (AV). The AV should be familiar with the AWA, which was passed by Congress in 1966 and has been amended several times to include pertinent aspects.<sup>2,3</sup> It is currently under amendment at the time of this publishing. This act was developed to set general standards for humane care and treatment that must be provided for certain warm-blooded animals.<sup>2</sup> It is necessary that the veterinarian be accredited by the USDA/APHIS to provide signatory for the APHIS Form 7002.<sup>2</sup> Last, the veterinarian must be familiar with the necessary paperwork required by the USDA/APHIS.<sup>1</sup> Because this is for the situations addressing nontraditional species, cat and dog requirements are not discussed.

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## **WHY BE AN ATTENDING VETERINARIAN FOR A UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LICENSEE OR REGULATED FACILITY?**

The opportunity to be a full- or part-time AV for one of these situations brings interesting locations and situations. In other words, it brings you outside of the regular veterinary practice and presents new opportunity and experience. Part-time AVs can work this easily into their existing practice to increase revenue and bring in new clients. You may find yourself able to provide and ensure proper veterinary care to large numbers of unusual animals that would not necessarily be received in your existing practice. The education and experience needed as well as gained from these situations will benefit you and the animals that you examine and treat.

## **ACCREDITATION**

The National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP), established by APHIS in 1992, is managed nationally, but authorization is still managed on a state-by-state basis. This program has allowed for more organized administration of the program by standardizing the accreditation procedures and requirements.<sup>4</sup>

Veterinarians who wish to become accredited through this program must be a graduate with a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine or an equivalent degree (any degree that qualifies the holder to be licensed by a state to practice veterinary medicine) from a college of veterinary medicine and also be a veterinarian that is licensed or legally able to practice veterinary medicine in the state in which the veterinarian wishes to perform accredited duties.<sup>5</sup> Next, they must take the Initial Accreditation Training (IAT). Each state will offer an Orientation Program following the IAT. There are 2 categories established for accreditation (category I and category II). Category I includes all animals except food and fiber species, horses, birds, farm-raised aquatic animals, all other livestock species, and zoo animals that can transmit exotic animal diseases to livestock. Category I animal species are limited to dogs, cats, laboratory animals (rat, mouse, gerbil, guinea pig, hamster), nonhuman primates, rabbits, ferrets, minks, gophers, amphibians/reptiles, and native nonruminant wildlife. Category II includes all animals. Examples are food and fiber animal species (cow, pig, sheep, goat, all ruminant), horses (mule, ass, pony, zebra), all bird species and poultry, farm-raised aquatic animal species, livestock species (bison, captive cervid, llama, alpaca, antelope, other hoofed animal), zoo animals that can transmit exotic animal diseases to livestock, as well as category I animals (eg, dogs, cats, small rodents). It is recommended that the AV be a category II accredited veterinarian.<sup>6</sup> Specific requirements exist for these categories, and they must be renewed every 3 years. In this way, specialization is provided for accreditation.<sup>4</sup> Accreditation is accomplished by completing educational units found at the veterinary accreditation Web site. Once the program is completed, the applicant must submit the application form VS Form 1-36A.<sup>7</sup> This form is submitted to the NVAP Coordinator. Once approved, the applicant will receive a certificate, an Accreditation Renewal Date, and a 6-digit National Accreditation Number.<sup>4</sup>

## **ROLE OF THE ATTENDING VETERINARIAN**

The role of the AV is to uphold the standards of the AWA. Ensuring that the facility inspected is current within the regulations set forth by the AWA is a key factor. The AV will help the facility set up an adequate animal care program and should have expertise in the management of animals maintained in the facility. Supporting the animal care inspectors is also part of the AV's job.

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