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## **SCIENCE Confirms ‘Secret’ Government Use of Inspection Service that Watchdog Calls ‘Shill for Research Laboratories,’ Especially ‘Criminal’ Labs Abusing Animals, Breaking Federal Law**

WASHINGTON, DC – A national research watchdog that earlier this week exposed new, secret government laboratory inspection procedures that use an independent organization – it pockets money from facilities it inspects in an obvious conflict-of-interest – has now learned regulators are misleading news media.

AAALAC - American Association for the Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care – is a “shill for research laboratories who have consistently violated federal laws and regulations,” said SAEN, an Ohio-based national watchdog that monitors the nation's research facilities for illegal activities and animal abuse.

SCIENCE magazine this week confirmed: "the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) made a significant—and apparently secret—change to how it oversees laboratory animal welfare...Instead of fully inspecting all of the nearly 1,100 facilities...it mandated partial 'focused' inspections for labs accredited by a private organization of veterinarians and scientists called AAALAC International.”

See: <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/05/usda-now-only-partially-inspects-some-lab-animal-facilities-internal-documents-reveal>

A large portion of the AAALAC budget is based on membership fees from the very laboratories it inspects. Those fees range from \$4,600 to \$16,650 per laboratory /per year according to the organization’s website, said SAEN.

“If AAALAC actually did its job and revoked the accreditation of laboratories who have consistently violated federal laws, the organization could lose a significant amount of funding,” said Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T., SAEN co-founder.

SAEN maintains its investigation reveals the majority of laboratories that have committed serious violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, even those punished with fines, are still, somehow, fully AAALAC accredited.

That, charged SAEN, renders AAALAC as “nothing more than a device used by criminal laboratories to proclaim their innocence and mislead the public into believing that all is well despite garnering multiple federal violations, federal fines.”

SCIENCE was told AAALAC accredited labs have "better records," but SAEN's information shows that is patently false.

Utilizing the U.S. Dept. Agriculture database of inspection reports, SAEN has compiled damning statistics revealing a coziness between AAALAC and laboratories.

From 2018 – present, SAEN said “AAALAC currently accredits 65 percent of all U.S. laboratories who received Critical or Direct non-compliances in that time period,” despite the fact that those citations are often tied directly to animal injuries or deaths.

Yet, said SAEN, Critical/Direct USDA non-compliances were issued in only two percent in all USDA/APHIS/AC laboratory inspections, meaning that AAALAC continues to accredit the worst labs in the U.S.

Additionally, AAALAC continues to accredit multiple laboratories who have previously paid federal fines as well as racking up current serious non-compliances.

According to SAEN, University of Louisiana, Lafayette remains AAALAC-accredited despite recently reporting the heat stress deaths of three monkeys, while also previously paying multiple federal fines.

University of California, Davis, another example of AAALAC generous accreditation policy for a “criminal laboratory, remains accredited despite piling up multiple serious non-compliances in 2018, paying a 2018 federal fine, and recently reporting the heat stress death of an infant primate.”

University of Wisconsin, Madison, paid the most recent federal fine of any laboratory of \$74,000 , as well as amassing multiple serious non-compliances - yet this criminal lab is still AAALAC Accredited.

Oregon Health & Science University remains accredited despite leading the U.S. in serious USDA non-compliances with nine in a little more than three years, as well as racking up multiple less serious non-compliances.

SAEN has contacted the Administrator of USDA/Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and called upon the agency to remove AAALAC accreditation from the process of determining which laboratories receive full or partial inspections. SAEN has also contacted the CEO of AAALAC, calling for major revisions in the accreditation process.