

Editorial

Take another look at the instructions for authors

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Back in 2004, the editors decided to stop publishing the instructions for authors in the journal itself, electing instead to post them online on the Association's website. Not surprisingly, the instructions have grown in length and complexity over the intervening years, most often because of the addition or clarification of various editorial policies. It seemed useful, therefore, to once again print the entire set of instructions in the journal and to point out some of the important changes that have been made.

Of course, we encourage prospective authors to read the instructions for authors in their entirety before submitting manuscripts to the journal—and even before beginning to write them. A few areas, however, warrant a closer look, either because of changes or because of their importance. And, of course, don't hesitate to contact me (kmatushek@avma.org) or one of the other editors directly if you have any questions.

Authorship

Authorship is the means by which individuals receive credit and recognition for the scientific research they perform. Not surprisingly, therefore, the research community as a whole, including the journal, has an interest in ensuring that only those deserving of that credit and recognition are listed as authors.

To be listed as an author, individuals must meet all 3 of the following criteria: 1) made a substantial contribution to the conception and design of the study, the acquisition of the data used in the study, or the analysis and interpretation of that data; 2) were involved in drafting or revising the manuscript critically for important intellectual content; and 3) approved the submitted version of the manuscript and all subsequent revisions, including the version to be published. In addition, individuals listed as authors must be willing to take public responsibility for the work, especially in the event that the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work is questioned. Individuals who made a substantial contribution to the study but who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in the acknowledgments.

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Funding and conflicts of interest

Readers have an expectation that they will be informed of all financial interests and other relationships that could have—consciously or unconsciously—influenced the information authors present in their manuscripts or the interpretation of their findings. Thus, authors are required to provide detailed information on all relevant financial interests, activities, relationships, and affiliations occurring at the present time or within the 3 years prior to manuscript submission. In addition, if no such conflicts existed, authors are asked to provide a statement indicating that there were no conflicts of interest.

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In addition, manuscripts describing prospective studies involving privately owned animals (eg, animals owned by clients, staff members, students, or private entities such as humane societies) must include a statement indicating that informed owner

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Patient confidentiality

Authors have an obligation to protect the privacy of their patients and clients and to maintain the confidentiality of patient and client information. Thus, authors of any manuscript containing patient information that would allow specific animals to be identified (eg, patient descriptions, pictures, or pedigrees) must obtain a signed statement indicating that the owner has consented to publication of the information. Similarly, authors must obtain a statement of consent from any identifiable person appearing in photographs. All identifying information must be removed from radiographs, ultrasonographic images, and similar images.

Reporting guidelines

Thorough reporting is essential when readers are attempting to assess the strengths and weaknesses of published research, and the use of reporting guidelines can help ensure thoroughness of reporting. The journal supports the use of reporting guidelines and encourages authors to make use of them when preparing their manuscripts. Although numerous reporting guidelines have been published, the most common are CONSORT (for randomized clinical trials), REFLECT (for clinical trials involving livestock and food safety), STARD (for studies evaluating diagnostic tests), STROBE (for observational studies), PRISMA (for systematic reviews and meta-analyses), and ARRIVE (for studies involving laboratory animals)

Supplemental materials

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