

## Cultivating a positive culture of compliance

Melinda Bruns, BS, RVT, LATG, Research Compliance Analyst:  
Post-approval Monitoring, Office of Research Integrity,  
University of Cincinnati, OH.

*Mrs. Bruns shares how her personal experiences led to her passion for animal-based research and explains how post-approval monitoring can foster better relationships within the research community.*

### What inspired you to pursue a career in veterinary technology?

Like most people in the veterinary field, I am an animal lover! My pets have always played an influential role in my life, especially in my early childhood. I learned how veterinarians provide compassionate care for animals at the age of eight, when my dog, Tracy, was diagnosed with a terminal illness and put to rest. My experiences with my pets and their veterinarians inspired me to pursue a career in the veterinary field. I focused my undergraduate studies on veterinary technology and biology with the intent of becoming a veterinarian. It was during college, while working in a laboratory as a research technician and spending my weekends at a veterinary clinic, that I became aware of the diverse career opportunities for veterinary technicians.

### You began your career working in clinical environments, including an equine hospital. Tell us about this experience and how you made the transition to managing a laboratory animal colony.

During college, I was grateful to be offered an internship at Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital (Lexington, KY). Working there with world-renowned veterinarians and technicians remains one of my most memorable and rewarding experiences.

They practiced advanced and cutting-edge medicine, which motivated me to learn the science behind it.

Upon my graduation, I applied for a position managing a laboratory animal colony that supported studies related to cancer and cell biology. In this position, I learned the fundamentals and the importance of medical research. When a close family member became ill, it hit home for me. I began to understand and appreciate the need for translational medicine, and I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in a field that improves the quality of life for both humans and animals.

### As a research compliance analyst, your job is to assist the research community in linking the gap between regulation and practical science. What made you decide to pursue this career? What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?

I felt that my background provided a unique fit for the role. I can merge my practical science research experience with my exposure to the veterinary field to approach regulatory issues from both perspectives. This is advantageous when communicating regulatory changes to the research community and serving as a liaison to the IACUC. Working in regulatory oversight provides opportunities to interact with a variety of people and personalities, resolve problems and educate the research community on new regulations and research techniques. The most rewarding aspect of my job has been



the experience of establishing and leading a post-approval monitoring program.

### Tell us why you are so passionate about raising awareness of the importance of post-approval monitoring and the role of the IACUC.

The heart of post-approval monitoring is to support animal-based research and cultivate a positive culture of compliance within the research community. Having come from a research background, I know that for researchers it can at times feel overwhelming to keep up with the changing regulatory requirements. Often researchers only perceive the IACUC as enforcers of regulations, but post-approval monitoring is as much about education and serving as a resource to the research community as it is about monitoring. That's why I'm passionate about leading a post-approval monitoring program. It encourages scientists, veterinarians, animal care staff, the IACUC and institutional leadership to build relationships with one another. This teamwork is essential to further the progress of research and to advance the health and well-being of humans and animals.