

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION IN THE ANIMAL SCIENCES

R. Frahm, American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists, 201 Spickard Street, Blacksburg, VA 24060, Ph. 540-961-1780, Fax 540-961-1790, e-mail rrfrahm@adelphia.net

The concept of certifying professional expertise is generally understood and practiced among professions, and is widely recognized and accepted by the public. Some examples of professional certification programs widely recognized and respected by the general public include: Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Professional Engineer (PE), and the Board Certification programs in an area of specialization commonly available to human and animal healthcare professionals.

In general, professional certification programs are targeted to serve the public's interest and enhance the status of the profession. Creditable professional certification programs provide assurance to the public that the services of a certified professional can be utilized with confidence that the individual has a high level of professional expertise, has remained current with new professional knowledge, and practices a high level of professional ethics and integrity.

Professionals who qualify and become certified gain valued professional recognition.

Modern agriculture is becoming increasingly complex. More government regulations and controls plus increased public scrutiny provide an incentive that practicing professionals establish accountability and credibility by means of registry and certification programs.

A group of visionary animal scientists established the American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists (ARPAS) in 1984. The formation of ARPAS was endorsed and supported by: Poultry Science Association, Equine Science Society, American Society of Animal Science, American Meat Science Association, and American Dairy Science Association. These societies are Affiliate Societies of ARPAS. Each society appoints a representative to serve as a director, with voting privileges, on the ARPAS Governing Council.

The purpose of ARPAS is to provide recognition of professional expertise in the animal sciences through certification, and to enhance the status of the animal sciences profession. Certification of professional expertise in the animal sciences is based on: appropriate academic training, passing a comprehensive exam in at least one area of specialization, professional experience, commitment to a stringent code of professional ethics, and participation in ongoing continuing education. Currently there are 1,438 members of ARPAS and the membership is steadily increasing. There are three categories of membership: Professional Animal Scientist (PAS), Registered Animal Specialist (RAS) or Registered Animal Product Specialist (RAPS), and Board Certification in a discipline. There are two levels of membership based on experience, Associate Member and Full Member.

Professional Animal Scientist

Animal scientists who successfully meet the requirements of Professional Animal Scientist are authorized to utilize the designation PAS in their signature block. To qualify as a Professional Animal Scientist requires a minimum of a B. S. degree with a major in one of the animal sciences or a closely related field, passing a comprehensive exam in at least one area of specialization, commit to a stringent code of professional ethics as identified by ARPAS, and commitment to participate in continuing education. In order to retain membership in ARPAS and certification status requires a minimum of 16 Continuing Education Units (CEU) by participating in appropriate educational events. One CEU is earned for each full hour of actual presentation at qualifying educational events. Individuals without appropriate professional experience initially qualify as Associate Members. To attain Full Member status requires a B. S. degree plus four years of experience, a M. S. degree plus two years of experience, or a Ph. D. degree plus one year of experience. The areas of specialization that are currently available are:

- * Aquaculture
- * Beef Cattle
- * Companion Animals
- * Dairy Cattle
- * Horses
- * Laboratory Animals
- * Goats
- * Poultry
- * Sheep
- * Swine
- * Meat
- * Dairy Product Sciences
- * Poultry Products

Registered Animal Specialist and Professional Animal Product Specialist

Individuals who do not have the academic training required to qualify as a Professional Animal Scientist, but have become productive and respected animal scientists through experience, may apply for ARPAS membership as either a Registered Animal Specialist or Registered Animal Product Specialist.

Individuals who qualify as a Registered Animal Specialist or Registered Animal Product Specialist are authorized to utilize the designation RAS or RAPS, respectively, in their signature block. There are no academic degree requirements for this category of membership, but some post high school training in the animal sciences is desirable. To qualify as an Associate Member in this category, the applicant must be recommended by a Professional Animal Scientist and pass the comprehensive exam in at least one of the 13 areas of specialization that are currently available. This is the same exam that is administered to an applicant for membership as a Professional Animal Scientist. Full Member status is achieved after a minimum of six years of appropriate professional experience. Members in this category must complete the same Continuing Education requirements as Professional Animal Scientist members, and practice the same code of professional ethics.

Board Certification (Diplomate)

The highest level of recognition for professional competency and expertise awarded by ARPAS is Board Certification in a discipline. Currently there are five disciplines within the animal sciences available: Behavioral Science, Food Science, Genetics, Nutrition, and Physiology. Board Certification is available to any Full Member of ARPAS who has completed a M. S. or higher degree in one of the animal sciences or closely related fields with emphasis on the discipline of interest, and who meets other requirements as determined by the ARPAS Governing Council. As part of the process, an applicant is required to pass a comprehensive exam in the discipline of interest. Successful applicants attain Diplomate status in the discipline.

Benefits of ARPAS Membership

ARPAS members are publicly recognized for achieving a high level of professional competency and expertise as demonstrated by: appropriate academic training, appropriate professional experience, passing a comprehensive exam in one or more areas of specialization, and a commitment to continuing education and adhering to a stringent code of professional ethics. ARPAS members are entered into the ARPAS Registry which is maintained in a publicly accessible directory on the ARPAS web site, www.arpas.org. ARPAS promotes and encourages the professional development of its members through the Continuing Education requirements and by sponsoring various seminars, symposia, and other educational events. Members also receive a copy of the *The Professional Animal Scientist*. The *Professional Animal Scientist* is a peer-reviewed journal published by ARPAS every two months. It serves as a vehicle for publishing manuscripts on applied technology, reviews on contemporary issues, and technical notes. ARPAS also encourages the formation of local chapters of ARPAS, which are available to all ARPAS members in the defined geographic area of the local chapter. There are currently five active chapters of ARPAS, and others are under consideration.

An invited paper presented at the National Poultry Extension Workshop, Poultry Science Association
Annual Meeting, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, July 14, 2006