

# Recommendations for Governance and Management of Institutional Animal Resources

Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Universities

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## Joint AAMC-AAU Ad Hoc Committee on the Governance and Management of Institutional Animal Resources

WILLIAM H. DANFORTH, M.D., *Co-Chairman*, Chancellor,  
Washington University

HENRY L. NADLER, M.D., *Co-Chairman*, Dean, Wayne State  
University School of Medicine

ALBERT A. BARBER, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor—Research Pro-  
grams, University of California, Los Angeles

THOMAS B. CLARKSON, JR., D.V.M., Chairman, Department  
of Comparative Medicine, Bowman Gray School of Medicine

D. KAY CLAWSON, M.D., Executive Vice Chancellor, Univer-  
sity of Kansas Medical School

JOE D. COULTER, Ph.D., Professor and Chairman, Department  
of Anatomy, University of Iowa College of Medicine

FRANKLYN G. KNOX, M.D., Ph.D., Dean, Mayo Medical  
School

D. GAYLE McNUTT, Director of Communications, Baylor Col-  
lege of Medicine

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An ad hoc Committee for the Governance and Management of Institutional Animal Resources was established at the direction of the Association of American Medical Colleges and the Association of American Universities and was charged to review systematically institutional policies and procedures regarding the governance and management of animal resources and to recommend general guidelines that would support good practices in the management of institutional animal resources. This report was endorsed by the Executive Council of the AAMC on September 12, 1985 and by the Association of American Universities on October 22, 1985.

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## *Preamble*

During the last quarter century, the momentum of discovery in the biological, behavioral and medical sciences has steadily increased, while the application of this new knowledge has brought incalculable health benefits to mankind. Laboratory animals have played an indispensable role in these advances and in the education of professionals who serve the medical and health needs of humans and animals.

If the public's rising expectations for relief from disease, disability, and premature death are to be realized, research involving laboratory animals must continue. Thus, significant responsibility for the governance and management of laboratory animal resources devolves upon individual investigators and faculty, as well as the institutions in which their research and instruction are performed. All individuals whose work requires them to use animals in education or scientific inquiry must understand and be committed to fulfilling the legal and moral responsibilities of such use for both ethical and scientific reasons. Only healthy, well-cared for animals yield valid scientific data, and thus both practical and philosophical considerations enjoin us to the highest standards of care.

The academic community has a responsibility for meeting two challenges. First, it must assure that all animal facilities, as well as research and training procedures, are beyond reproach and are in

compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and guidelines. Though deficiencies in compliance with these standards may be rare, those that do occur only serve to undermine public confidence in all research and must be corrected. Where fiscal constraints have limited the development of state-of-the-art facilities, efforts to obtain the necessary resources should be redoubled. Second, the academic and scientific community must educate the non-scientific public about the important benefits to be derived from the use of animals in research and education.

This document has been prepared to assist universities, medical schools and hospitals in their efforts to support research and instruction involving animals by making recommendations for improving coordination and communication among the many units of the university involved in animal use. It does not prescribe specific technical procedures or guidelines for the treatment of animals; rather, it is intended to augment the Animal Welfare Act, the NIH Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, the PHS Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals by Awardee Institutions, the U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research and Training, the standards of the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, and the many existing institutional policies.

The recommendations set forth below are addressed to those individuals—administrators, animal resource managers, investigators, faculty, and public affairs officials—whose wholehearted support is needed to maintain research and education in the current open environment. Their adoption may be of assistance in avoiding deficiencies in research protocols and instructional practices involving animals and may help to promote awareness among all segments of the institution of the importance of animals to the success of the scientific and education missions. These recommendations should not be construed as organizationally prescriptive, but should serve as guidelines, recognizing that institutions are organized differently and may meet obligations in different ways.

## Responsibilities of Institutional Chief Executive Officers

In order to develop and maintain a viable animal resource program at any institution, a strong commitment to the humane care and use of animals must be a high priority within its administration. Therefore, the following recommendations are directed specifically to institution presidents and deans, especially of medical, veterinary, and dental schools.

- Establish firm, centralized administrative and financial support for animal use in research and instruction, and ensure that high standards for animal care are an institutional priority.
- Designate one high-ranking "institutional official", reporting directly to the chief executive officer, to be responsible for the entire animal resource program and to coordinate with the administration, investigators, faculty, veterinarians and animal care committees to ensure a clear, visible chain of authority for the program. In some of the larger decentralized universities, it may be desirable to have more than one "institutional official."
- Move as rapidly as possible to meet the standards required for accreditation by the American Association for the Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) at each of the institution's animal facilities.
- Encourage open communication and be receptive to needs for resources, facilities improvement, and better security measures.
- Establish an institution-wide public education campaign to educate the public regarding the need for animals in research and instruction and the important benefits that accrue from such use.

- Establish procedures for and assume direct institutional leadership of any crisis situation that may arise. An assault upon animal use threatens the integrity and reputation of the entire institution.
- Be prepared to prosecute to the full extent of the law any individual(s) involved in crimes against the institution such as laboratory break-ins and theft or destruction of property.

## Responsibilities of the Institutional Official

The primary role of the institutional official is to administer the animal program and to promote open communication with each functioning unit of the institution (e.g., medical school, veterinary school, psychology department) involved in animal care and use. The following recommendations are offered to facilitate those responsibilities.

- Ensure that all animal facilities are in compliance with applicable requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and pertinent state and local laws and regulations, and adhere to the PHS Policy, the NIH Guide, and the U.S. Interagency Research Animal Committee Principles.
- Coordinate the institution's public education campaign regarding the benefits of animal use, seeking input from investigators, faculty, veterinarians and students.
- Establish or modify animal care committees to meet the standards specified in the PHS Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Expect these committees to insist upon the highest quality animal care and facilities, and to support and promote research in compliance with existing standards.

- Ensure that the use of animals in education is reviewed to make certain that all regulations and guidelines are being followed.
- Require good recordkeeping practices for all aspects of the animal program, particularly APHIS inspection reports and records of all actions taken to correct deficiencies, AAALAC reports, animal welfare assurances, and animal care committee reports, activities and recommendations.
- Systematically review the status and condition of each functioning research unit. Each unit should prepare a periodic assessment of its animal program, fully describing any problems or deficiencies and the schedule for corrective action, the resource needs of the facility (i.e., repairs, renovation, new construction), and its accreditation status.
- Develop and implement when necessary an institutional plan for dealing with an attack on animal facilities or an assault on the merit or validity of specific research projects. Involve the administration, veterinarians, principal investigators, animal care committee(s), public affairs officials and the general counsel.

## **Responsibilities of the Animal Resource Director**

The following recommendations are provided for animal resource directors or veterinarians-in-charge, who are in a unique position to ensure the smooth functioning of the animal care program on a daily basis.

- Provide a comprehensive program of veterinary medical care for all animal colonies, employing properly trained veterinarians, technicians and caretakers. Diagnostic resources, preventive medicine, post-surgical care and mechanisms for emergency care are important components of a sound animal program.

- Develop institutional guidelines which incorporate the applicable requirements of the Animal Welfare Act, NIH Guide, PHS Policy, IRAC Principles, and AAALAC standards, taking into consideration the occasional inconsistencies in those requirements.
- Provide full support for each approved research protocol, assisting the investigators in achieving the highest standards of animal care in the particular context of their research.
- Ensure that animal care personnel are aware of the high institutional priority of keeping all animal facilities (including off-campus sites) in compliance with the standards of the Animal Welfare Act, the NIH Guide, or where applicable, the requirements of AAALAC. Develop a comprehensive plan to serve the sanitation, housekeeping and maintenance needs of each research and teaching unit.
- Prepare and distribute manuals and guides which summarize the institutional policies and procedures regarding procurement, housing, care and use of laboratory animals to all individuals/departments that are involved in animal research or instruction.
- Ensure that hiring policies promote the selection of employees who are professionally dedicated to the appropriate care and use of animals.
- Establish and promote continuing education and training in animal care for those individuals involved in the use of animals in research or classroom instruction.

## **Responsibilities of Investigators**

Since the support of investigators is crucial to maintaining high standards of animal care in any research setting, the following recommendations are provided for implementation by research faculty and staff.

- Become knowledgeable about and conduct all research and inquiry in accordance with approved policies governing the care and use of laboratory animals.
- Submit research protocols, as required by animal care committees, accompanied by a short lay description of the project and its intended benefits for use as needed by the institution's animal care committee or public affairs representatives.
- Maintain complete records of procedures undertaken during all animal experiments.
- Meet research protocol requirements in approved, centralized facilities whenever possible. Where research protocols dictate unusual environmental, dietary or colony requirements that cannot be met in central facilities, be sure the research team and animal resource personnel appreciate the need for these special conditions.
- Conduct a thorough orientation for students, post-doctoral fellows, technicians, animal care workers, and others participating in research on the rationale for the use of animals in each protocol. Be sensitive to the needs of newcomers to adjust to participating in research performed on animals.
- Maintain a scholarly, sensitive, respectful environment during all animal experimentation.
- Participate in continuing education and training programs designed to keep investigators abreast of the latest techniques and procedures in animal research.
- Devote time and effort to institution-wide activities to promote a general understanding within the academic community and the lay public of the need for animals in research and instruction.
- Emphasize the role of laboratory animals when presenting research results or discussing human diseases with lay audiences and describe the contributions of humanely conducted

animal studies to the development of new technologies and treatment capabilities.

## **Responsibilities of Faculty Using Animals for Instructional Purposes**

Although there has been a dramatic reduction in the use of animals for instructional purposes over the past two decades, live animals remain an important and necessary adjunct teaching model in certain courses. The following recommendations are therefore directed to faculty members involved in this type of instruction.

- Ensure that animals used for instructional purposes in classrooms or laboratories receive the same humane care and treatment as those used for research purposes.
- Review any teaching methods involving animals to ensure that all regulations and guidelines are being followed.
- Promote sensitivity and concern among students for the need for humane care and treatment of animals.

## **Responsibilities of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees**

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs), in addition to their prescribed duties, act in an advisory capacity to the institutional official and serve as a valuable resource in the conduct of research and instruction at institutions. In order to further enhance the role of these committees, the following recommendations are offered.

- Evaluate existing institutional policies, standards, procedures, guidelines and manuals relating to laboratory animal care and use and conduct reviews regarding the adequacy of animal facilities. Make recommendations for any appropriate modifications to the institutional official.
- Maintain and promote an open and cooperative relationship with investigators, faculty, the animal resource director and the institutional official.
- Support scientific justifications for research protocols that necessitate a departure from conventional care and use requirements, and document the committee's rationale for its approval of such departures.
- Keep careful records and ensure the confidentiality of all committee proceedings and activities, including any information that relates to trade secrets, research protocols and procedures, and other privileged data.

### **Responsibilities of Institutional Public and Government Affairs Officials**

Public and government affairs officials are often called upon by the media and the public to respond to inquiries about research being conducted at their institutions, and may be the first persons contacted in the event of a demonstration or criminal act directed at the institution. The following recommendations are therefore directed toward these officials.

- Become familiar with the types and objectives of the research being conducted at your institution.
- Identify and train several articulate, effective speakers from the research and teaching faculty who could be called upon to explain to the public the need for and benefits of using animals in research projects and instruction.

- Participate in the institution-wide public education campaign to educate the lay public, the media, and political and governmental officials regarding the importance of animals to research and teaching at your institution.
- Nurture community relations by scheduling speakers to elaborate on the necessity of animal research to civic and lay groups.
- In your contacts with federal, state and local officials and their staffs, keep them informed of the importance of animal research.
- Develop methods to keep institutional officials, investigators, veterinarians and lab personnel informed of the concerns and activities of animal rights organizations.
- Ensure that, where applicable, the role of laboratory animals is emphasized appropriately in press releases on scientific discoveries at your institution.
- As part of the crisis management plan, provide spokespersons to discuss the nature and objectives of research with the media. While it is helpful to respond immediately to allegations of animal abuse, it is equally important for an articulate expert to discuss objectively this research and the generic need for animals in research.

## References

Animal Welfare Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-544), as amended by the Animal Welfare Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-579) and by the 1976 Amendments to the Animal Welfare Act (Public Law 94-279).

Regulatory authority under the Animal Welfare Act is vested in the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and implemented by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Rules and regulations are codified in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 9 (Animals and Animal Products), Subchapter A (Animal Welfare), Parts 1, 2, and 3. Copies can be obtained from the Deputy Administrator, USDA, APHIS-VS, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

National Institutes of Health Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, prepared by the Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources of the National Research Council for the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH Publication No. 85-23, revised, 1985. Copies may be requested from the Division of Research Resources, NIH, Building 31, Room 5B59, Bethesda, MD 20205.

Public Health Service on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals by Awardee Institutions, revised, June, 1985. Copies may be requested from the Division of Research Resources, NIH, Building 31, Room 5B59, Bethesda, MD 20205.

U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research and Training, prepared by the Interagency Research Animal Committee for the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Adopted May, 1985. The Principles appear in the appendix of the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals by Awardee Institutions.