



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE Policy ACC-004 - Animal Health and Welfare

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that:
 - a) the health and welfare of animals are not negatively impacted beyond what is approved in the animal use protocol (AUP);
 - b) unexpected and experimentally related negative impacts on animal health and welfare are investigated;
 - c) proper records are kept for animals that die or that have reduced health and welfare; and,
 - d) a standardized and appropriate approach is established to handling animals with reduced health and welfare at all sites under the authority of the VIU Animal Care and Use Program.

SCOPE

2. This Policy applies to all Vancouver Island University (VIU) Persons, which means those participating in scholarly activity, including full-time and part-time faculty, staff and students (including, without limitation, clinical faculty, visiting professors, and any persons enrolled in any degree, non-degree, diploma, certificate, or residency program at VIU) or any person who teaches, conducts research, or works at, or under the auspices of VIU.
3. This Policy applies to all animals used in research, teaching, testing or breeding, including those housed in VIU animal facilities, or any other facilities that fall under the review of the VIU Animal Care Committee (ACC).

DEFINITIONS

4. Health and welfare: Although the term “animal welfare” can capture concerns related to health, “health” and “welfare” are separated for clarity. Health refers to biological functioning, in the sense of absence of disease or injury, and normal growth and development. Welfare refers to behaviour (performance of normal species-specific behaviours) and emotional states (lack of negative emotional states such as fear and pain).

5. Morbidity: Diseased state, disability, or poor health due to any cause.
6. Spontaneous non-experimentally related conditions: Conditions may arise in animals during teaching, research, testing, or breeding that are unexpected and unrelated to the activities being conducted but negatively affect animal health and welfare. For example, occasional mortality or specific disease conditions such as spontaneous tumors can occur in breeding colonies or other “normal” animals.
7. Unexpected experimentally related conditions: Any effect of an experimental or teaching procedure which is not described in the AUP or anticipated during planning that negatively affects animal health and welfare. These typically include a series of events rather than a single event. Examples include: higher than expected morbidity or mortality rates resulting from complications such as recurrent post-surgical infections in multiple animals; increased numbers of animals unexpectedly reaching humane endpoint prior to experimental endpoint; unexpected change in time course and/or progression of adverse effects; or, stereotypical behaviour that interferes with normal functioning.

POLICY STATEMENTS:

8. As per the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) guidelines, activities involving animals must be designed to ensure that animals are not “subjected to unnecessary pain or distress”.
9. All animals that have poor health or welfare (both spontaneous non-experimentally related and unexpected experimentally related conditions) must receive standard medical or other accepted treatment or be euthanized. These animals must undergo a treatment regime commensurate with their condition. If standard veterinary treatment would affect the experimental results, the animals will be euthanized unless withholding treatment for the condition(s) is specifically approved in the AUP.
10. The University Veterinarian is ultimately responsible for conducting diagnoses and determining appropriate treatments, control measures and/or euthanasia for clinical cases.
11. The University Veterinarian will discuss any animal health or welfare concerns with the Principal Investigator (PI) to determine the most appropriate course of action. PIs and their staff must comply with the veterinarian’s recommendations for treatment or euthanasia. The University Veterinarian must do their best to accommodate the goals of the science or teaching.
12. The University Veterinarian must be available to respond to concerns about animal health or welfare at any time.

13. Animals that have reached their humane endpoint, as outlined by the approved AUP, must be euthanized. Only the University Veterinarian can approve exceptions.
14. The University Veterinarian must resolve any health and animal welfare concerns that cannot be readily resolved through collaborative interactions between the PI and/or a Facility Manager. The conflict must be resolved in a time frame appropriate to the severity of the impact on the animal and/or the risk of deterioration of an animal's welfare.
15. If the PI cannot be reached in the case of a pressing health and welfare problem, the University Veterinarian has the authority to euthanize any animal and where deemed necessary institute measures to protect the health and welfare of that and other animals. Exceptions to this are when the PI has pre-arranged authorization for facility staff or managers to euthanize animals at humane endpoint.
16. Individuals responsible for daily animal health observations must have the necessary ability, knowledge and skill to assess the health and welfare of animals under their care.
17. All unexpected experimentally related conditions must be reported to the University Veterinarian. Individuals charged with monitoring the animals are responsible for reporting.
18. The facility manager must keep a record of all animals found dead or euthanized at humane endpoint (e.g. monthly facility "mortality logs"), whether reported by facility staff or researchers. The intent is to detect rates of unexpected deaths above normal and flag them for further investigation. The logs must be available to the University Veterinarian and if requested as part of a Post-Approval Monitoring Audit.
19. All unexpected experimentally related conditions must be investigated in order to understand the underlying cause(s). Investigation of unexpected deaths can include discussion with the University Veterinarian, post-mortem analysis, histopathology, etc.
20. Sick animal identification, diagnosis, and treatments must be documented. Date of death or euthanasia and type of termination (found dead or euthanized) must be recorded and this information must be visible at tank / cage / room level.
21. Each facility must have an SOP on how animal health and welfare concerns are reported to the designated facility contacts and the required response time.
22. All unexpected experimentally related conditions and associated interventions or treatments must be disclosed within the progress report of the AUP at annual and full protocol renewal.

23. If the health and welfare of an animal is affected and Non-Compliance is suspected, then the ACC must be notified (see Policy ACC-001 on Compliance).

RESPONSIBILITIES

24. It is the responsibility of any person involved in the care and use of animals to follow this Policy.
25. It is the responsibility of PIs to adhere to the humane and experimental endpoints in his/her approved AUP.
26. It is the responsibility of the PI to provide current 24-hour contact information for personnel who will receive and respond to notifications about animals whose health and welfare is declining or who are found dead.