



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE Policy ACC-012 - Euthanasia

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide direction regarding euthanasia of animals used in research, teaching, testing and breeding at VIU, which is consistent with Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) requirements.

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.

DEFINITION

3. Euthanasia: The definition of euthanasia is a *gentle death*, and in the context of animals used in science, refers to doing what is humanly possible to minimize pain and distress, given the circumstances under which euthanasia is performed.

POLICY STATEMENTS

4. Experimental animals are euthanized when study endpoints have been met and no other use consistent with the tenet of the three Rs can be found for them. Endpoints can include, but are not limited to:
 - a) to obtain for cells or tissue for *in vitro* research;
 - b) to obtain for blood, tissue or other biological samples;
 - c) for diagnostic purposes;
 - d) to prevent unavoidable pain and distress; or,
 - e) for animals that are retired from their respected breeding program.
5. Endpoints must be consistent with the *CCAC Guidelines on: Choosing an Appropriate Endpoint in Experiments Using Animals for Research, Teaching and Testing*.

6. Death of an animal is rarely accepted as a scientific endpoint and Principal Investigators must present conclusive evidence to support the use of such an endpoint.
7. Whenever an animal is euthanized, it must be done with respect and in a way that ensures death is as painless and free of distress as possible.
8. The most important criteria for acceptance of a method of euthanasia is that it has a rapid initial depressive action on the central nervous system to ensure immediate insensitivity to pain, and that steps are taken to minimise distress in the animal prior to the procedure. Euthanasia should result in rapid loss of consciousness, followed by respiratory and cardiac arrest and ultimate loss of all brain function.
9. Personnel responsible for euthanizing animals must be trained so that they:
 - a) execute the appropriate and approved method of euthanasia both effectively and humanely and in a manner that remains consistent (i.e. competent);
 - b) are able to recognize signs of pain and distress in relevant species; and,
 - c) recognize and confirm unconsciousness, and subsequently death.
10. The ACC is responsible for the approval of the method of euthanasia for any study involving the use of animals.
11. All Animal Use Protocols involving euthanasia must include a description of the methods to be used. The ACC will consider the method of euthanasia on a case-by-case basis according to its appropriateness in a given situation, taking the scientific literature and scientific goals of the research or teaching activity into account, and in consultation with the University Veterinarian, researcher and animal care staff as appropriate.
12. The recognised methods of euthanasia are listed as either acceptable or conditionally acceptable based on the *CCAC Guidelines on: Euthanasia of Animals Used in Science*.
 - a) Conditionally acceptable methods are listed as such, because there is a greater potential for operator error or safety hazards, they might not consistently produce humane death, or they are not well documented in the scientific literature.
 - b) The use of conditionally acceptable methods may be acceptable by the ACC in certain circumstances where there is scientific justification.