Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Policy on the Program of Veterinary Care

Date Reviewed: 3/21/2019

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to explain the delegations and responsibilities of Attending Veterinarian in providing veterinary care at UC Santa Cruz. This policy covers research and teaching animals in the animal care and use program.

POLICY:

The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (the Guide), defines the Attending Veterinarian (AV) as the veterinarian responsible for the health and well-being of all laboratory animals used at an institution. It states, “The institution must provide the AV with sufficient authority including access to all animals, and resources to manage the program of veterinary care. The AV should oversee other aspects of animal care and use (e.g., husbandry, housing) to ensure that the Program complies with the Guide.”

United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal Welfare Act and the Public Health Service policy also require that the AV have the authority to oversee the adequacy of all aspects of animal care and use, including animal husbandry and nutrition, sanitation practices, zoonosis control, and hazard containment.

To comply with the above referenced regulations and guidelines, the UC Santa Cruz AV is official responsible for the health and welfare of the teaching and research animals at the university and at its off-site facilities.

Procedure:

The AV must be notified by phone or e-mail of any significant animal health concerns that are the direct result of a research protocol or if a significant spontaneously occurring colony health problem occurs.

Animal Procurement and Transportation:

All applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations must be followed when obtaining and transporting animals. To maintain the biosecurity of the laboratory animal colonies, animals must be purchased from the Approved Vendors or if not available,
from a supplier that has been approved by the AV prior to shipment. Animals may only be procured if they are linked to an approved IACUC protocol.

**Preventive Medicine Programs:**

Disease prevention is the cornerstone maintaining healthy animals and limiting variables in their environment that may interfere with research. Some of the aspects of an effective preventive medicine program include adequate animal biosecurity procedures to prevent the introduction of unknown diseases; provisions for quarantine and stabilization; implementation of disease surveillance programs including investigations of unexpected deaths; procedures to minimize stress during handling and restraint; zoonosis prevention; etc.

**Sick, Injured and Dead Animals:** It is the responsibility of everyone working with animals at UC Santa Cruz to report any sick or injured animals to the AV or facility designee. Reporting must be timely and accurate. Records of the diagnosis, testing, delivery of medical treatments, and final resolution must be maintained by the appropriate facility manager. Assurance of compliance with study and humane endpoints is very important and recurrent or significant problems should be reported to the IACUC. Unexpected deaths and unexpected or increased mortality must be documented and investigated as potential sources of infection.

The AV has the authority to immediately suspend any activity that causes significant animal welfare or health concerns. The Attending Veterinarian will immediately notify the IACUC of any such situation.

Medical Records: Documentation of provision of adequate veterinary care is important for regulatory perspective and animal welfare reasons. Records of sick and injured animals, as well as individual or colony animal records should be maintained for prophylactic treatments and diagnostic tests including rodent sentinel testing, documentation of euthanasia, etc. Group health records are acceptable for non-USDA covered animals maintained as a cohort.

**Pain and Distress:** Recognition, prevention, and alleviation of pain and distress are important and integral responsibilities for everyone working with animals. Since recognition of early signs of pain can be difficult, especially in stoic animals, training in the recognition of species-specific signs of pain is important. In general, we assume that a procedure that causes pain in humans will also cause pain in animals. Preemptive analgesics or anesthesia should always be given before a procedure is performed that is expected to cause more than minor momentary pain, unless medically
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contraindicated or if IACUC exempted based on scientific necessity. If unanticipated pain that is more than momentary is recognized, relief of pain must be initiated promptly.

Consideration for minimizing the duration and intensity of distress is important when caring for animals and when planning the use of animals on a protocol. Humane use of animals dictates minimizing or eliminating factors that lead to distress. In addition, distress can cause significant physiological alterations which may negatively impact research.

**Euthanasia:** Unless an IACUC exemption is given for scientific reasons, the methods for euthanasia for all species should be consistent with the most current edition of the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia. Selection of agents is based on such factors as the species, animal’s age, scientific objectives, agents and equipment available, and most importantly, inducing rapid unconsciousness without pain and distress. It is very important to be trained in delivery of the methods of euthanasia, especially for physical methods of euthanasia. People who will be using physical methods of euthanasia must first be trained and then certified by a trainer designated as proficient in the technique by the Attending Veterinarian or designee. Euthanasia of animals for experimental purposes must comply with methods described in the IACUC-approved protocol. Animals euthanized for medical reasons or as culls must be euthanized following the AVMA recommendations.