ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE ANIMAL ETHICS FIELDWORK RESEARCH/TEACHING APPLICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Research on animals is subject to both federal and state legislation, and the University of Wollongong is committed to ensuring that all research conducted at this university is fully compliant with the following:

Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013
Animal Research Act 1985
NSW Animal Research Regulation 2010
Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, NHMRC 2007

Paragraph 2.4.1 of the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013) states:

“Investigators have personal responsibility for all matters that relate to the wellbeing of animals that they use including their housing, husbandry and care. This responsibility extends throughout the period of use approved by the AEC until provisions are made for the animal at the conclusion of their use.”

The Code defines wellbeing as: “An animal is in a positive mental state and is able to achieve successful biological function, to have positive experiences, to express innate behaviours, and to respond to and cope with potentially adverse conditions. Animal wellbeing may be assessed by physiological and behavioural measures of an animal’s physical and psychological health and of the animal’s capacity to cope with stressors, and species-specific behaviours in response to social environmental conditions.

It is mandatory that all researchers are familiar with the Code, and with their legal responsibilities as specified in Section 2.4 of the Code: "Responsibilities of Investigators. These documents can be obtained at:


These are also available from the Ethics Unit in the Research Services Office, Bldg 20.

Researchers have a responsibility to protect and promote the welfare of animals used. It is important to consider the following principles embodied in the Code when designing and carrying out projects:

- Reduction of animal use
- Replacement of animal use
- Refinement of animal use.

Under the Animal Research Act (1985), approval by an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) is required for the use of any vertebrate animals for research and teaching purposes. Approval can be given for
up to 3 years. Annual renewal of approval is conditional on submission of all required paperwork and compliance with the Code. In assessing applications it is often difficult for the AEC to obtain a clear “picture” of what happens to individual animals from the beginning to the end of the project. The AEC must assess the impact of all procedures and the project as a whole on animals.

The Application

Focus on what is happening to the animals and what is being done to ensure their wellbeing.

- The application should state clearly what happens to individual animals from the beginning to the completion of the project. The impact of procedures needs to be detailed.
- Provide a step by step explanation of all procedures and treatments (trapping and tagging techniques, surgical procedures, administration of substances etc.) and the expected effects. (Flow charts or sequence of events tables are often of assistance.) You may use Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in your application. These may be pre-existing SOPs (available from the AEC web-site at http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/animal/UOW073275.html) which may be modified if necessary. Alternatively, you may develop new SOPs and submit them with your application. SOPs must be developed and/or used when training new researchers. Any SOPs that you are using should be clearly identified in the application and a copy attached to the application form itself. SOPs should be reviewed every 3 years.
- New researchers should not perform procedures alone until deemed competent to do so by the Animal Welfare Officer and Principal Investigator (or their delegates). Certificates of Competency will be used to certify and record competencies. When certified competent, new researchers can perform procedures unsupervised.
- Detail factors that will impact on animals such as housing (type, duration, opportunity for social interaction should be considered).
- Justify animal use and why the species and number of animals have been chosen.
- Provide details of qualifications and experience of personnel regarding procedures to be performed.
- Where the impact on the animal of a proposed treatment/procedure is uncertain, or additional animals are needed to train researchers, this should be incorporated into the proposal in the form of a pilot study or training stage.

Applications must be written primarily for an interested, intelligent lay person, not a specialist. The use of specialist language may delay processing of an application while explanations are sought. If the research is likely to be novel to the AEC (ie new researcher or research area) the researcher is encouraged to attend the AEC meeting during which the proposal is considered to give a presentation on the research.

Investigators should be familiar with:

Frequency of Meetings

The Animal Ethics Committee usually meets eight times per year (deadlines for agenda items are listed at http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/UOW009369.html).

Number of Copies

Forms can be downloaded from: http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/animal/UOW108401.html. Applications must be submitted in hardcopy and should be sent to: The Animal Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, University of Wollongong, Northfields Avenue, Wollongong, NSW 2522. Please supply the original plus 16 copies of the application. This form replaces any previous initial and renewal animal research forms.
COMPLETION OF FIELDWORK RESEARCH/TEACHING APPLICATION FORM

SECTION 1: ADMINISTRATION

Q2 Participating Researchers

State clearly the name and role of each investigator on the project, together with their qualifications and experience. Indicate their experience with the species used and the procedures to be undertaken. If the researcher has no experience, state how training will be given. New researchers must not perform procedures alone unless certified competent to do so. Certificates of Competency will be used to certify and record competencies. When certified competent, new researchers can perform procedures unsupervised. In the case of sole researchers another qualified individual (Alternate Principal Investigator) must be identified to look after animals in case of illness or other absence. Participants who are only providing advice, training and/or routine animal care and who have no interest in the outcome of the experimental procedures of the application should be listed under ‘Support Personnel’.

SECTION 2: JUSTIFICATION FOR ANIMAL USE

Q8-10 Aim and significance of the project in lay terms

Briefly describe the aims, significance and expected benefits of the project (the description should be designed for a lay audience). Summarise the procedures to be used in this research in reaching its aims and explain why this research is important. State what the expected benefits of the research are (eg in increasing our understanding, improving animal management, and/or achieving educational objectives). You must justify potentially severe or ethically contentious procedures. For example:

- unrelieved pain and distress including where the planned end-points will allow severe adverse effects to occur;
- death as the end point;
- reuse of animals;
- prolonged restraint or confinement;
- the use of non-human primates.

Q11-12 Reasons for animal use

Alternatives to animals must be investigated and implemented wherever possible. If alternatives exist you must explain why these cannot be used.

SECTION 3: NUMBERS AND TYPE(S) OF ANIMALS

Q14-16 Numbers and type(s) of animals

Clearly explain why the number of animals was chosen. Note: too few animals (resulting in statistically insignificant data) may be as much of a problem as too many animals (in terms of wastage).
SECTION 4: ANIMAL SOURCE, HOUSING, MAINTENANCE AND PROCEDURES

Q18(iii), Q19 (iii) and Q20 (iii) DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF YOUR STUDY

It is important to present this section so that it is clear what is happening to animals from the beginning to the end of the project and over what time sequence. Start with where animals are being obtained, and give a detailed description of the sequence of events through to euthanasia or release. Flow charts and other diagrams are often helpful. Where several groups of animals receive different treatments, listing them in tabular form may assist (include information about control groups). Information required will vary with the nature of the project.

Please note you may refer to a pre-existing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with variations as appropriate, or develop a new SOP for experimental procedures.

Q18 OBSERVATION ONLY STUDIES

Q18(iii) In your SOP or description, include the following information where relevant:

- Any bait or equipment to be used, such as cameras, recording equipment or lights
- Any possible impact on animal welfare e.g. from disturbance to habitat, and/or the use of equipment. Explain how any possible adverse effects will be minimised.

Q19 STUDIES INVOLVING TRAPPING AND/OR CAPTURE

Please note you may refer to a pre-existing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with variations as appropriate, or develop a new SOP.

Q19(iii) In your SOP or description, include the following information where relevant:

- Details of equipment used (e.g. type and size of traps, nets etc. Include pictures if possible). Note: If pitfall traps are to be used, the NSW Department of Primary Industries guidelines must be followed. See [www.animalethics.org.au/policies-and-guidelines/wildlife-research/pitfall-traps](http://www.animalethics.org.au/policies-and-guidelines/wildlife-research/pitfall-traps)
- Bait, food, bedding etc.
- Location and numbers of traps/nets per investigator.
- Frequency and times of checking.
- Methods of handling or restraining animals.
- How long animals will be kept, whether they will be transported and if so, how.
- Procedures such as administration of substances, insertion of radio transmitters, tagging, collection of samples and so on should be described in detail. If animals are to be kept for longer than 24 hours, provide details in Q20 below. For release or euthanasia provide details in Q21.
  - Possible adverse effects, such as injury to animals, predation, aggression by animals trapped together or inclement weather. Describe how these effects will be managed. (NB: Consult Guidelines to promote the wellbeing of animals used for scientific purposes: The assessment and alleviation of pain and distress in research animals. [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea18](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea18).
  - Any other details that will assist the AEC in assessing impact of the research on animal welfare.
Q20 HOLDING ANIMALS

These questions should be completed if animals are to be held for longer than 24 hours. Please note you may refer to a pre-existing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with variations as appropriate, or develop a new SOP.

Q20 (iii) In your SOP or description, include the following information where relevant:

- Your reason(s) for holding animals – observations, experimental procedures, collection of samples etc.
- Transport of animals away from location of capture. Distances covered, cages used, number of animals per cage, temperature control, provision of water and food where applicable, any possible adverse effects, and how these will be managed.
- Location of animal holding facilities, details of cages or other housing (dimensions, materials, bedding, provisions for shelter, environmental enrichment etc).
- Number of animals per cage and reason for this number
- Food, frequency of feeding and monitoring, who will feed and monitor animals
- For surgery and/or collection of samples include details of procedures
- Any possible adverse effects of holding and procedures, such as unnatural environment, pain from procedures, exposure to inclement weather, interference with sleeping and/or mating patterns etc. How will these effects be monitored and minimised? (NB: Consult Guidelines to promote the wellbeing of animals used for scientific purposes: The assessment and alleviation of pain and distress in research animals http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea18.)

Animal monitoring

Animal monitoring by suitably qualified and experienced personnel is of utmost importance. The level of monitoring required will vary according to the type of research and animals used as well as acclimatisation. Details should include methods used and frequency of monitoring. You must develop and attach monitoring sheets with checklists appropriate for the procedures and species you are using. A sample Monitoring Record for Experimental Procedures Form can be found at http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/animal/UOW108401.html.

Q21 Fate of animals

This question relates to the release or euthanasia of the animals. If released, state clearly when and where this will be done. Outline steps you will take to maximize the welfare of animals that are being released. If animals are to euthanased, state euthanasing agent used, site of administration and dose. Euthanasia must be carried out by experienced personnel. (NB: Consult Guidelines to promote the wellbeing of animals used for scientific purposes: The assessment and alleviation of pain and distress in research animals http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea18).

Please note you may refer to a pre-existing Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with variations as appropriate.

SECTION 6: DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

If recombinant DNA technology or infectious, toxic, radioactive or carcinogenic agents that may be harmful to other animals or persons are being employed, a Risk Assessment Form should be completed (and counter-signed by your Head of Department) and submitted with the application.