

## WVU IACUC POLICY: Acquisition and Disposition of Biomedical Research and Teaching Animals

### Purpose

This policy ensures animals used for biomedical research and teaching at West Virginia University (WVU) are acquired from known sources to certify good health and well-being, and that they are disposed of in an ethical, practical and humane manner when they are no longer required for research or teaching use. All vertebrate animals **must** be acquired lawfully, used judiciously and disposed of properly. Regardless of method, the final animal disposition **must** be listed on the IACUC-approved animal use protocol.

### Policy

Below are the IACUC-approved methods of acquisition and final disposition of all animals involved in biomedical research and teaching at WVU.

### Acquisition

1. No animals may be purchased, leased, accepted as donated, captured or otherwise acquired without prior IACUC approval of an Animal Care and Use Protocol describing the proposed use of those animals.
2. Approval of animal procurement:
  - a. The Office of Laboratory Animal Resources (OLAR) is responsible for the approval of the procurement of animals used in OLAR facilities. Contact OLAR and/or refer to their website for additional information on ordering animals, imports and exports, and approved vendors. <https://hsc.wvu.edu/olar>
    - i. Animals that are requested from non-vendor sources (also known as an “import”) will need to have health records evaluated. The import **must** be approved by veterinarian prior to the animal’s arrival on campus. Animals from these sources will be required to quarantine separate from existing animal colonies, as determined by a veterinarian.
    - ii. The veterinarian can deny importation of the animals.
    - iii. Non-vendor sources of USDA covered species may require a veterinary visit to ensure the quality and care of animals at that location. WVU cannot source animals from entities which do not maintain a high standard of care and biosecurity.
3. Approved commercial vendors should be used when possible for all animals, which includes laboratory animals, livestock, amphibians, fish, and birds.
4. IACUC approved breeding or maintenance protocols are required and **must** be referenced when they are the source for experimental protocols.
5. Animals may be transferred from other IACUC approved protocols. (see Disposition 2. Transfer to another protocol)

6. Wildlife species may be captured and housed in an IACUC approved facility or captured and released on-site. Appropriate state and federal wildlife regulations and collection permits **must** be obtained, if applicable. All procedures **must** be described in an approved IACUC animal use protocol.
  - a. The Attending Veterinarian **must** approve housing of wildlife species within the vivarium.
7. Animals used for research or teaching, but not owned by WVU, remain the property of their owners. Veterinary care is provided as necessary. A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), consignment, or boarding contract is typically in place.
8. When bringing in new animals to an existing group/herd, supervised introduction **must** occur to ensure acceptance of the new animal(s).
9. To meet USDA record-keeping requirements, acquisition of USDA-regulated species used in biomedical research **must** be processed through OLAR. Records of acquisition for dogs and cats **must** be maintained.
10. Acclimation periods **must** be implemented and appropriate for the species and its prior experiences. *See WVU IACUC Policy #12-005 Acclimation of Newly Acquired Animals.*

### **Disposition**

- West Virginia University endorses the ethical considerations of the 3R's in use of animals. The concept of reduction advocates minimizing the number of animals used to achieve scientific results including strategies of reuse and the sharing of resources.
- Prior to the euthanasia of any healthy, viable vertebrate animal, researchers **shall** consider alternative dispositions including: use of animals in future research or teaching activities, transfer of animals to another researcher, appropriate use of animals as a food source for other species or people, adoption, animal sanctuaries, and provision of long-term care for long-lived species for projects yet to be identified.
- The IACUC may request appropriate justification when viable alternatives to euthanasia appear to exist but have not been addressed by the principal investigator.

For all animals, the approved protocol **must** indicate the final disposition for the animals involved. The following is a list of acceptable dispositions.

1. **Euthanasia** – Animals may be euthanized in accordance with the current American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals, with a method approved in the protocol.
2. **Transfer to another protocol/Reuse** – Animals may be transferred from one active IACUC-approved protocol to another active approved protocol. This requires the submission of a Transfer Form and approval from the appropriate facility personnel and/or veterinarian. (see <https://hsc.wvu.edu/olar/forms/> for more information)
  - a. The new protocol **must** be approved for the species and number of animals being transferred.
  - b. If the animal(s) to be transferred has been used for experimental procedures, approval **must** be obtained from the appropriate veterinarian or the WVU IACUC before the animal(s) can be transferred and reused.
  - c. Any procedures conducted under the original protocol will not interfere with the procedures to be conducted under the receiving protocol.
  - d. In cases where drugs have been administered to animals that could cause deleterious effects (such as muscle necrosis at the injection site), these animals should not be reused.

- e. Transfers involving animals having multiple survival surgeries across protocols may require additional approval. *See WVU IACUC Policy #14-002 Multiple Survival Surgeries in the Same Animal.* All surgeries **must** be accounted for, animals should be identified to preclude their inadvertent reuse, and all surgeries **must** be scientifically justified.
  - f. Under no circumstances can a veterinarian or the WVU IACUC independently approve a transfer that would involve a USDA-covered animal having multiple survival surgeries across protocols (i.e., one surgery on one protocol, and the second surgery on another protocol), this includes surgeries for sterilization. **Such transfers require USDA approval** following a request from the Institutional Official. If an animal is obtained from a vendor that has already undergone a surgical procedure and another surgical procedure will be completed under an approved WVU IACUC protocol, USDA approval is **not** required.
  - g. When food regulation or other interventions have been used, veterinary staff should be consulted to evaluate and determine whether a period of non-use (so animal(s) can return to baseline weight) is warranted, before beginning work on a new project.
3. **Adoption** – Animals may be adopted. The adoptable status of an animal is determined and approved according to the *WVU IACUC Policy #19-001 Animal Adoption Policy*.
4. **Export to another institution** – Animals may be transferred to a suitable institution for research or teaching.  
(Contact OLAR for more information)
5. **Release** – Animals part of wildlife studies may be released back into the wild.
- a. The animals to be released **must** have been wild-caught and being returned to an appropriate habitat, preferable from the location of capture.
  - b. Appropriate state and federal wildlife regulations and collection permits **must** be obtained if applicable.
  - c. The animals **must** be healthy and disease free.
  - d. If substances have been administered to the animals, then Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations may apply and should be consulted.
  - e. Animals can be released immediately after capture and processing (i.e. wildlife species) without being held in captivity.

Other methods of disposition can be requested by contacting the Office of Animal Welfare and providing specific information for consideration.

**USDA Species:** You **must** ensure that USDA record-keeping requirements are met for acquisition and disposition of USDA-covered species.

**Infectious Agents:** If animals have been exposed to infectious agents, pathogens, or parasites and a method of disposition *other than euthanasia* is to occur, the animals **must** have been shown to be free of the infectious agents, pathogens, or parasites by appropriate examination or testing approved by the IBC, the IACUC and the Attending Veterinarian.

**Financial Responsibility:** The financial responsibility for all animals will remain with the principal investigator or their department until final disposition (e.g. euthanasia, transfer, adoption, export) has occurred, unless other arrangements have been made with your department or the facility.

## **References**

1. [Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations](#), United States Department of Agriculture, 2017.
2. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#), National Research Council, 2011.
3. [Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching](#), Federation of Animal Science Societies, 2010.