

Procedure: IACUC-51
Date: April 14, 2022
Enabled By: AWR, PHS
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UC Davis

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Title: Use of Shelter Animals in Research and Teaching Projects

I. Purpose:

To establish the UC Davis policy for the use of shelter animals in research and teaching as well as projects conducted within animal shelters.

II. Background:

The use of random source animals, those from animal shelters, or Class B dealers for general biomedical research often raises concerns/questions with members of the public. UC Davis has elected not to use animals from shelters or class B dealers for biomedical research. There are, however, activities such as teaching within the School of Veterinary Medicine that benefit both the students and the animals/shelters. The students gain valuable hands on experience and the animals gain by access to procedures such as spay/neuter, veterinary care, socialization, and thus can be placed for adoption. There is also a growing need for research within shelters directed at improving the health of the animals within the shelter environment. In this policy, the word “shelter” is used for any pound or animal regulation department of a public or private agency where animals are relinquished.

III. Policy:

A. Use of shelter animals for research – campus

California Civil Code 1834.7 prohibits animal shelters that accept animals from the public or take in stray or unwanted animals from selling, donating, or otherwise transferring a living animal to a research facility.

B. Use of shelter animals for teaching – School of Veterinary Medicine

Shelter animals may be used for teaching and training activities within the School of Veterinary Medicine if the following conditions are met:

1. The animal population is either abandoned or owner-surrendered.
2. For abandoned animals, the shelter must comply with both California and municipality law for the designated “hold period”, such that animals are only used in teaching or training once the hold period has been completed.

3. The procedures conducted are routine veterinary procedures and approved in an IACUC protocol.
4. Procedures are to diagnose and/or correct an animal's pre-existing medical condition, or the procedure is to spay or neuter and undertaken under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.
5. The animals are returned to the shelter following teaching and training activities for the shelter to manage under their shelter policies.
6. Teaching colony animals that are adopted from the shelters and owned by the university will be adopted from the university according to the IACUC adoption policy and cannot be used for general biomedical research.
7. Cadavers and cadaver tissue obtained from shelters is to be used only for School of Veterinary Medicine teaching activities and as coordinated through the Gourley Clinical Teaching Center.

C. Use of shelter animals for research – School of Veterinary Medicine

California Civil Code 1834.7 states: *“A research facility, animal dealer, or other person shall not procure, purchase, receive, accept, or use a living animal for the purpose of research, experimentation, or testing if that animal is transferred from, or received from, an animal shelter entity or other person that accepts animals from the public or takes in stray or unwanted animals.”* Thus, live shelter animals cannot be used for research purposes.

UC Davis and the School of Veterinary Medicine support applied research conducted on shelter animals in shelters that benefits the shelter animals. Requests for such studies must be submitted to the IACUC and requires initial review and approval by the School of Veterinary Medicine Shelter Research Committee (see IV. Procedure) and subsequent review and approval by the IACUC.

D. Use of cadavers from shelters for research

University employees are not permitted to contact any shelters or shelter staff independently (see IV. Procedure). The use of cadavers or tissues obtained through the shelter for research is acceptable when the following conditions are met:

1. The animals were humanely euthanized according to the shelter's policies and not for the purposes of research.
2. The animals come from the owner-surrendered population in compliance with California Civil Code 1834.5(e) that prohibits the use of abandoned animals for scientific or other type of experimentation.
3. The shelter complies with California Civil Code 1834.7(a) which requires providing notice by posting and owner surrender forms that animals turned into the shelter may be used for research purposes or to supply blood, tissue, or other biological products. The signed owner surrender forms are on file at the shelter.
4. Cadavers or tissues will be provided free of charge.

IV. Procedure:

University employees are not permitted to contact any shelters independently. All projects must be coordinated through the IACUC office. This will ensure the appropriate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the university and the shelter is in place. Any research project undertaken at a shelter requires IACUC approval prior to conducting research. IACUC protocols are only required for teaching if the use of the animals is part of a scheduled teaching session. Protocols must be initially submitted to the IACUC and accompanied by a 1-page lay description of the proposed research or teaching, including a clear statement of the benefit of the research or teaching to shelter animals that can be shared with the Shelter Director or designee.

Before IACUC review, all research projects involving live shelter animals will be forwarded by IACUC staff to the School of Veterinary Medicine Shelter Research Committee for review and approval. After completion of review by the Shelter Research Committee, the Chair of this Committee will contact the identified shelter to ascertain if the shelter is willing to participate in the study and if the animal needs for the study can be met.

Request for cadavers and animal tissue for research must be submitted to the School of Veterinary Medicine Shelter Research Committee for review of the request for suitability, approval, and priority. Requests must include a clear statement of requirements, **including how the research will benefit shelter animals or animal populations**. After completion of review by the Shelter Research Committee, the Chair of this committee will contact the identified shelter to ascertain if the shelter meets the above criteria (e.g., posting and owner signature), is willing to provide cadavers, and if the animal needs can be met. All arrangement for pick-up and transport of cadavers will be made by the Gourley Clinical Teaching Center. The Gourley Clinical Teaching Center will contact investigators when suitable cadavers or tissues are available.

V. Resources:

1. Animal Welfare Act and Regulations
<https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act>
2. ILAR, Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals
<http://nap.edu/12910>
3. PHS Policy
<https://olaw.nih.gov/policies-laws/phs-policy.htm>
4. California Civil Code 1834.7
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2269