TITLE: Investigation of Concerns Involving the Care and Use of Animals

PURPOSE: To describe the procedures for the investigation of non-compliance or welfare issues that pertain to the care and use of animals at the University of Arizona.

REVIEW/REVIZIONS: Permanent amendment/revisions to this policy must be presented to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) for review before implementation, with the exception of updating internet URLs, if required. Continuing review of this policy by the IACUC will occur at least every three years.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 06/10/13

PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: University employees and students and members of the public.

POLICY/PROCEDURES:

The IACUC will investigate concerns involving the care and use of animals at the University of Arizona, including non-compliance with federal or institutional regulations and requirements, or reports of animal welfare issues. Concerns can be reported by University employees, students or members of the public. This includes concerns about any animal owned and/or used by the University of Arizona for research and teaching, regardless of the location of the animal.

In cases where an animal’s immediate welfare is threatened, University Animal Care veterinarians have the authority to act on behalf of the animal’s welfare, up to and including immediate euthanasia.

Mechanisms for reporting
There are several mechanisms for reporting concerns, which can be in person, by phone or in writing:

- To the IACUC via an online form (http://orcr.arizona.edu/iacuc/welfareform)
- To any member of the IACUC or IACUC Office staff
- To any UAC veterinarian or through University Animal Care
- To the University Ethics and Compliance Hotline at (866) 364-1908

Expectations of individuals involved in the care and use of animals
There is an expectation that University employees and students involved in the care and use of animals are aware of the federal and institutional regulations and requirements that pertain to their use. It is also expected that these individuals are aware of the obligation to report non-compliance or welfare issues to the IACUC and to do so in a timely manner.

Confidentiality
Reports can be made anonymously. The confidentiality of any complainant will be maintained by all individuals involved in the review and/or investigation of alleged non-compliance or animal welfare issues.

In addition, the Arizona Board of Regents has a “whistle-blower” policy to prohibit supervisory personnel from taking adverse personnel action against an employee, or failing to take an otherwise appropriate action, as a result of the employee's good faith disclosure of alleged wrongful conduct to a public body or to a designated university officer on a matter of public concern. An employee who discloses and subsequently suffers an adverse personnel action as a result is subject to the protection of ABOR Policy 6-914 Protection of Employees from Retaliation for Whistleblowing.
Review and investigation
Alleged protocol non-compliance or animal welfare issues will be reported to the IACUC Chair. The Chair will designate one or more IACUC members to review the allegations. Allegations that do not meet the regulatory definition of IACUC non-compliance or animal mistreatment will not be further investigated. These matters may be referred to other individuals for resolution, if appropriate.

Allegations that do meet the regulatory definition of IACUC non-compliance or animal mistreatment will be investigated. The Chair will designate one or more IACUC members to investigate the allegations. Investigations may involve examination of animals, meetings with personnel, a review of records and communications, and/or consultation with technical experts. The IACUC will review the findings and make a determination of corrective action, as appropriate.

Corrective Actions
If corrective actions are required to address non-compliance or animal welfare issues, the IACUC has the authority to:

- Require additional training for protocol personnel
- Remove protocol personnel, if training requirements are not met
- Require modifications to protocols for continued approval
- Temporarily or permanently suspend any or all protocol activities
- Withhold approval of a submitted protocol
- Make recommendations to the Institutional Official for additional sanctions

As per AWAR §2.31.d, 7 and PHS Policy IV,C,7, suspension or withholding of approval can only be decided by a majority vote of a quorum of the IACUC. These actions cannot be overturned by any mechanism other than a majority vote of a quorum of the IACUC. These votes must occur in real time and cannot be conducted by an email poll or similar.

Reporting
Individual circumstances will determine who is notified of findings. The protocol PI is generally notified of findings, if not involved in the original investigation. Reports may be submitted to the Institutional Official and their designee(s). Reports may also be submitted to the USDA or OLAW, as appropriate. If non-compliance with other University regulations is identified, pertinent information may be reported to the appropriate University officials.

Complainants should be assured that the IACUC takes any allegation of non-compliance or animal welfare issues with all seriousness. However, given the confidential nature of investigations, it may not be possible to provide details of the resolution to the complainant.

Right of appeal
An affected individual may appeal to the IACUC or other University official. As a result of this appeal, additional review of the issue may occur. However, only the IACUC can overturn a suspension of, or withholding of approval for, animal activities, as outlined above.

JUSTIFICATION:

Under AWAR (§2.31,c,4), the IACUC must “Review, and if warranted, investigate concerns involving the care and use of animals at the research facility resulting from public complaints received and from reports of non-compliance received from laboratory or research facility personnel or employees.”

PHS Policy (IV,B,4) mandates that the IACUC must “review concerns involving the care and use of animals at the institution”.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Policy 103