



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA

## **CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT**

**For the Use of**

**Animals for Research, Testing and Teaching**

**Version 2.0**

**November 2022 – November 2027**

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### Common Abbreviations

AEC	Animal Ethics Committee
The Act	Animal Welfare Act 1999
CEC	Code of Ethical Conduct (this document)
PI	Principal Investigator
QMP	Quality Management Plan
RTT	Use of animals in research, testing and teaching
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
Three Rs	Replacement, reduction, and refinement of use of animals in research or teaching
VUW	Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington

# 1. Introduction / Background on the Activities of the Applicant

## 1.1. Organisational activities

Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) and the organisations parented under the VUW Code of Ethical Conduct (CEC) undertake animal work for the purposes of research and teaching, with the principle aims of educating students and furthering knowledge on conservation practices, ecosystems, biodiversity, behaviour, and the molecular and cellular mechanisms of disease that can only be answered using animal models.

## 1.2. Research, teaching, and the Three Rs

Victoria University of Wellington is committed to the principles of the Three Rs (Reduction, Refinement, and Replacement), and all work carried out under the CEC shall only be approved once the VUW Animal Ethics Committee (“the AEC”) is satisfied that the work is in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and its Amendments and all other Acts of Parliament, regulations and by-laws relating to the obtaining, holding, possession, care, and treatment of animals.

## 1.3. Responsible persons

The Victoria University of Wellington Code of Ethical Conduct (“the Code”) is to be administered by the AEC, which is responsible to the University (the ‘Code holder’) as represented by the Vice-Chancellor who retains the institutional responsibility to ensure the University is compliant with the CEC. The Vice Chancellor’s delegated representative is the Vice-Provost (research).

## 1.4. Persons/organisations under the CEC

The CEC applies to all staff and students working for Victoria University of Wellington with animals in New Zealand, and any other organisation parented under the CEC. For research that occurs in collaboration with other NZ CEC holders, only one AEC will approve the research and only the CEC under which the approving AEC is appointed will apply.

## 1.5. Treaty of Waitangi partnership

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington was the first university in New Zealand to have a Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) Statute, adopted in 2019. The Tiriti Statute centres around principles that are drawn from Te Tiriti o Waitangi, New Zealand case law, Waitangi Tribunal reports, Crown policy documents, the University’s governance documents, and mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). The Statute guide available on the University website helps the University’s staff, and students give effect to the Tiriti principles in practical and impactful ways, including when undertaking Animal Research.

## 2. Establishment, Functions, Powers, and Membership of the Animal Ethics Committee

### 2.1 Functions, duties and powers of the Committee

- 2.1.1. The use of animals for teaching and research within VUW by staff and students shall be controlled by the Animal Ethics Committee of VUW. No member of staff or any student shall use animals for teaching or research without the prior approval of the Committee.
- 2.1.2. The AEC shall review written or on-line applications for the use of animals for teaching and research. The AEC will issue approval for a proposed animal use only if the AEC judges that the proposed use is in compliance with the Act, its Amendments, and all other Acts of Parliament, regulations and by-laws relating to the obtaining, holding, possession, care, and treatment of animals. The AEC may set, vary, and revoke conditions of project approvals as the AEC deems necessary for compliance with New Zealand law.
- 2.1.3. The AEC will conduct routine monitoring of all activities in which animals are used for research, teaching, or testing.

### 2.2. Membership of the AEC

The AEC will consist of a minimum of five members including four statutory members plus up to a maximum of eight other members based on eligibility as defined in sections 2.3 and 2.4.

### 2.3. Statutory members

- A senior representative of the University, endorsed by the AEC and appointed by the Code holder capable of evaluating proposals involving animal manipulation to act as the convenor and chair;
- A veterinarian nominated by the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) who is not employed by or associated with VUW to act as the AEC Veterinarian;
- An animal welfare representative nominated by an approved animal welfare organisation (such as the Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RNZSPCA]), who is not employed by or associated with the University, or involved in the use of animals for research and teaching;
- A person nominated by a territorial authority or regional council, not employed by, or associated with the University, or associated with the scientific community or an animal welfare agency.

### 2.4. Organisational members

Institutional members of the AEC are selected based on experience with animal research to provide a range of knowledge on topics covered by the AEC or to bring unique viewpoints for the evaluation of applications. At least one member must be appointed based on capability of evaluating scientific validity of projects. These members are appointed as per section 2.7 and approved by the Chairperson and Code Holder. Additional full members may include:

- A representative member of the Postgraduate Students Association (PGSA);
- An animal technician of the University or a Parented Organisation;

- A Victoria University staff member acting as Secretary for the AEC;
- A deputy Chair capable of evaluating proposals involving animal manipulation;
- Additional organisational members appointed by the Chair with approval from the Code Holder or their representative.

## **2.5. External members**

The Layperson, Animal Welfare Representative, and AEC Veterinarian will be remunerated at the standard University rate and will receive no less than \$320 per meeting for their time.

## **2.6. Additional members**

The Chair shall have power to co-opt additional members who add knowledge or specialist experience that will aid in the evaluation of applications or have experience in areas that are currently poorly represented which may include, but are not limited to: welfare, ethics, husbandry, physiology, pharmacology, immunology, pathology, surgery, health, nutrition, ecology, statistics, and Māori perspective. The AEC may elect to consult with external parties to provide additional expertise and knowledge where required to evaluate an application or to carry out proxy monitoring on behalf of the Committee where direct monitoring would be difficult.

## **2.7. Appointment procedures**

- 2.7.1. The Chair of the AEC is responsible for contacting external agencies for nominations to fill the positions of the Layperson, Animal Welfare Representative, and NZVA Veterinarian. The Chair may appoint any nominations subject to endorsement by the AEC for a period of up to three years. Members may be reappointed for additional terms with the approval of the nominating body.
- 2.7.2. The Chair shall be appointed by the Code Holder or their representative, subject to endorsement by the AEC.
- 2.7.3. A deputy Chair may be appointed from within the standing membership of the Committee.
- 2.7.4. The Secretary of the AEC shall be an employee of the University and approved by the Code Holder.
- 2.7.5. All other members of the AEC shall be appointed by the Chair of the AEC subject to endorsement by the AEC and approval of the Code holder or their representative.

## **2.8. Term of appointment**

Committee membership will be for a period of 3 years, with the option of reappointment subject to the needs of the Committee; the Secretary is exempt from the need for reappointment but may be replaced by the Code Holder.

## **2.9. Induction and training of new members**

New AEC members shall be provided with copies of the VUW CEC, policies and additional National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) training resources by the AEC Secretary. Where appropriate, a mentor from the AEC may be nominated to provide support for new members.

## **2.10. Vacancies**

In the event of a prolonged, unexpected, or continuing absence of a member of the AEC (such as non-attendance at the majority of the meetings in a calendar year or such that it affects the quorum of the AEC or operation of subcommittees) the Chair may request permission from the Code holder or their representative to appoint a replacement.

Vacancies in the membership of the Committee will not invalidate its actions, as long as a quorum of members is still available for Committee meetings (see 3.4), subcommittee meetings, and sufficient expertise is available to carry out monitoring activities. Vacancies must be filled as promptly as possible.

# **3. AEC Processes**

## **3.1. AEC meetings**

The AEC shall meet to assess any applications, modifications, notifications, non-compliances, adverse events, correspondence of importance, project reports (interim or final), monitoring reports, complaints, and any other relevant documentation received by the Committee for the use of animals in research or teaching.

## **3.2. Frequency of meetings**

The AEC shall meet at least four times annually, typically in March, June, September, and December. The date range for the next AEC meeting shall be agreed at the close of each AEC meeting and a poll distributed post meeting to set the next meeting date around the availability of the statutory external members on the Committee wherever possible. The meeting date may change, by prior notification and general consent of the AEC.

## **3.3. Timing for circulation of agenda Items**

The AEC meeting agenda shall be prepared and distributed by the AEC Secretary. Meeting documents will be distributed electronically to the AEC members ten days or more prior to the AEC meeting unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The AEC minutes shall be kept by the Secretary and distributed prior to the subsequent meeting.

## **3.4. Quorum**

Decisions on protocols can only be made if a quorum is present at a meeting. A quorum consists of 50% + 1 members and must include at least two statutory external members.

## **3.5. Decision process**

Decisions on protocols shall be made by consensus. If the AEC is unable to reach a consensus, the applicant will be contacted to provide additional information to support their application or be invited to speak directly to the AEC regarding their research protocol at a subsequent meeting. If a consensus cannot be reached after additional information is supplied by the Principal Investigator, then the protocol will be rejected.

### **3.6. Effective input of Committee members**

The Chair shall conduct the AEC meetings in a way that ensures external members of the AEC have opportunities to provide effective input into all committee decision making.

### **3.7. Establishment and membership of Subcommittees**

The Committee has the power to establish subcommittees. The creation of new subcommittees requires Committee consensus with terms of reference, decision making delegations, and membership established at the time of creation.

A subcommittee will have a minimum of three members including at least one external statutory member, or two external members for subcommittees reviewing new applications. Membership of a subcommittee will be elected by the Committee at the time of formation, or in the case of standing subcommittees, reviewed by the Committee annually or following a change in Committee membership.

The AEC has two standing subcommittees; the Interim Approval Subcommittee for reviewing amendments and B or lower impact applications between meetings (see 3.11), and the SOP Subcommittee for evaluating standard operating procedures used in experiments and animal facilities.

### **3.8. Conflict of interest**

Conflicts of interest will be declared to and managed by the Chair. In cases where members of the AEC have conflicts of interest, such as when their own protocols are under discussion by the Committee, the members may remain in the meeting to answer any questions but will be asked to leave while the application is discussed, and a decision is made. All conflicts of interest will be recorded in the minutes. Applicants invited to talk to the AEC will be asked to leave the meeting before a decision is made on their application.

### **3.9. Confidentiality**

Information submitted to the AEC is confidential unless applicants choose to waive confidentiality. Unless requested otherwise by the applicant, the AEC may release some of the details in an application as necessary to meet the university's obligations under NZ law. Where appropriate and subject to legal advice, names and details will be withheld to maintain the safety of the researchers and/or to protect commercially sensitive information.

### **3.10. Use of tele/video conferencing**

AEC meetings are held face to face, preferably in person, but videoconferencing may be utilised where in person attendance is not possible; attendees must be visible when attending remotely. In some



circumstances, applicants may be invited to talk to the AEC via tele/videoconferences at the discretion of the Chair when attendance in person is not possible.

### **3.11. Consideration between meetings**

Interim approval for a new protocol or amendment to a protocol may be considered at the discretion of the Chair where there is sufficient justification and grounds for the urgency of the approval. Interim approval requires a consensus of a subcommittee which includes at a minimum the Chair (or Deputy Chair or nominee), two of the statutory appointed external members and a science advisor or co-opted nominee. Interim approval is limited to protocols with a maximum manipulation grade of B. All interim approved protocols are considered for ratification at the next AEC meeting, which may endorse, endorse with conditions, or not endorse the decision of the subcommittee.

Urgent matters, such as requests for information and complaints that arise between meetings may be dealt with by the Chair and/or Secretary.

### **3.12. Public presence at meetings**

As all information submitted to the AEC is confidential unless applicants choose to waive confidentiality, public presence is not permitted for most AEC business. For general business matters, members of the public may be invited to attend.

### **3.13. Applicant presence at meetings**

Applicants may be invited to speak directly to the AEC at a meeting at the discretion of the Chair. Applicants may write to the Chairperson requesting attendance at the AEC meeting to present on their protocol and answer questions from the AEC, which will be at the discretion of the Chair. Applicants will be requested to leave prior to the AEC discussing the application.

### **3.14. Secretarial support**

A University employee with appropriate skills shall be employed by the University (Code Holder) to act as the Secretary of the AEC and as the administrator for the application process. The AEC Secretary shall keep records that include (but are not limited to) project applications, approvals, policies, project monitoring, procedures, site visits, and any complaints. Records maintained by the Secretary shall be stored digitally on the University's SharePoint site or secure servers.

### **3.15. Record keeping and information management**

All use of animals approved by the AEC will be recorded. Individual users shall, on behalf of the AEC, maintain the records for their use and make them available as required in terms of the regulations. These records shall be kept for a minimum of seven years and shall comprise the records required under the Act as stipulated on the Animal Use Statistics Form provided by MPI and shall include a record of:

- a. The type of animal manipulated or used
- b. The number of animals of each type manipulated or used
- c. The source of supply of each animal used
- d. The status of each animal used

- e. The purpose for which each animal was used
- f. The previous history of use of the animal
- g. The grade or degree of manipulation of the animal
- h. The fate of each animal used

The Secretary will maintain electronic copies of meeting agendas, minutes, correspondence with investigators, decisions, site visit reports, applications, animal numbers submitted to the Committee, and all other relevant documentation.

Any physical copies of forms shall be held by the AEC Secretary or the VUW Archivist for at least the minimum period specified in the Act. Online forms submitted through the designated VUW systems will be held in accordance with the VUW Information and Records Management, and Security policy.

### **3.16. Reporting of animal use statistics to MPI**

Applicants are responsible for providing accurate animal numbers used and manipulation grades with the final report for each project. The AEC Secretary is responsible for collating and reporting the animal use numbers to MPI. Outside organisations using the VUW CEC can elect to have the VUW AEC report their animal use statistics to MPI or can report their own use directly.

### **3.17. Protection of AEC members**

No member of the AEC will be personally liable for any act done or omitted by the AEC in good faith in the course of its operations as specified in section 104 of the Act.

## **4. Consideration of Applications by the AEC**

### **4.1. Criteria of consideration**

All applications for the use of animals in Teaching and Research must be submitted to the AEC by way of a standard application form.

Approval for the use of animals must be sought with respect to all animals which are subject to a manipulation as defined by the Act. When evaluating submitted applications, the AEC shall ensure that the protocol meets the criteria set out in section 100 of the Act and is not subject to any restrictions imposed by the Act.

Overall, the benefits of the use of animals must be balanced against any harms that may be caused to them by a manipulation. These objectives must be clearly stated in an application in plain, non-technical language, and the extent to which the objectives have been met must be included in the final report on the results of the study. The AEC reserves the right to rescind approval if it considers that the stated objectives do not reconcile with outcomes for reasons that were within control of those involved with the application.

Applicants at the time of applying must indicate to the satisfaction of the AEC the impact grading of the proposed manipulations. Where appropriate, the AEC may adjust the grading to reflect the impact more accurately. An applicant may appeal a change of grading decision by the AEC, but after

re-consideration of the appeal, the AEC final decision stands. Guidance is available to applicants to aid with their impact grading within the online application forms.

#### **4.2. Impact Grading**

Evaluation of impact grades will follow the guidance and grading examples included in section 7.7 of the Animal Use Statistics Guidance Document issued by the Ministry of Primary Industries. Grades are assigned from A to E based on the following groupings:

- Grade A – “No impact or virtually no impact”
- Grade B – “Little impact”. Manipulations of minor impact and short duration
- Grade C – “Moderate impact”. Includes manipulations of minor impact and long duration or moderate impact and short duration
- Grade D – “High impact”. Includes manipulations of moderate impact and long duration or high impact and short duration
- Grade E – “Very high impact”. Manipulations of high impact and long duration or very high impact for any duration.

#### **4.3. Outcomes after consideration**

For applications, the AEC will either:

- a. approve an application.
- b. approve an application subject to conditions of approval that must be met in order to commence or continue some or all of the project as specified by the AEC at the time of approval.
- c. require revision of an application, returning it for revision on ethical grounds. No work may commence or continue until the revised application is reassessed by the full Committee.
- d. decline an application.

For modifications, the AEC will either:

- a. approve a modification.
- b. approve a modification in part or subject to conditions of approval that must be met in order to commence or continue some or all of the work as specified by the AEC at the time of approval.
- c. require revision of a modification, returning it for changes on ethical grounds. No work requested in the amendment may commence or continue until the revised application is reassessed by the full Committee.
- d. reject a proposed modification. A new modification or application will be required for the requested program of work.

For interim reports, final reports, monitoring reports, and adverse incident reports, the AEC may:

- a. accept the report as tabled.
- b. seek further information from Principal Investigators or other personnel regarding the report before taking further actions.

- c. request changes or revisions to existing and future approvals, SOPs, and methodologies as a consequence of information presented in the report.
- d. suspend, revoke, or vary existing approvals in effect.
- e. take further action as agreed by consensus of the full Committee.

Decisions will be provided in writing to the Principal Investigator.

#### **4.4. Conditions of approval**

Where a project has been approved subject to conditions of approval, the project or indicated subsection of the application may proceed only once these conditions are met. Any condition of approval will be notified to the Principal Investigator in writing.

#### **4.5. Maximum approval period**

Approval shall be given for a period of 3 years, or any lesser period requested by the Principal Investigator or determined by the AEC. Where on-going projects extend beyond 3 years, a new application for the work is required, and any publications that have resulted from the work to date are to be reported.

#### **4.6. Power to suspend, revoke and vary approvals**

The AEC retains the power to suspend or revoke approvals or set, vary, or revoke conditions of project approval in the event that new information relating to the project comes to the attention of the AEC, or as a result of the AEC's monitoring of work undertaken, or where the AEC has concerns for the welfare of the animals being used in the experiments not accounted for in the original application.

The AEC reserves the right to cancel or suspend a protocol if the chief applicant fails to comply with the reasonable requests of the AEC in a satisfactory manner and within specified timeframes as set by the Chair or Committee.

#### **4.7. Changes to approved application**

Modifications and amendments to an approved protocol can be made by submission of the appropriate form to the AEC for approval. Approval for major changes to a protocol will be decided by the full Committee; minor changes may be approved by the Chair. Where it is unclear if a modification can be considered minor, the Chair will consult with relevant AEC members for expert opinion before making any decisions. All minor non-personnel changes not seen by the full Committee will be re-assessed at the next full meeting of the Committee.

Minor modifications include:

- a. Addition of personnel without loss of expertise (such as the addition of a new student) and where a change of IDAO is not required.
- b. Extensions of projects (up to the maximum length of 3 years) with no other change of project details
- c. Changes in details such as the number or source of animals. Changes in number shall be limited to 10% of the approved number

- d. Alterations to protocol such as small changes in the level of dose; using a different drug having a similar mode of action; using a different but approved anaesthetic
- e. Addition or refinement of minor procedures or SOPs that are grade B or lower and that will not alter the welfare status of the animal(s)

Anything not deemed a minor modification will be considered major and will be decided by the full Committee

## 5. Responsibilities under AEC approved applications

### 5.1. Compliance

To ensure that any research or teaching involving the manipulation of a live animal is carried out in accordance with this Code, the application form explicitly requests information on the three Rs, the justification for the manipulation, and the welfare measures to be undertaken for the animals. The project lead's manager is also a signatory on the application form and any approvals issued.

The Code Holder is responsible for monitoring compliance of approvals with all Acts of Parliament, regulations or bylaws pertaining to the care and treatment of animals. Particular attention will be given to sections 80 and 100 of the Act.

#### 5.1.1. Project Reporting

Unless directed otherwise by the Committee, Principal Investigators are expected to submit a final report within 3 months of the conclusion of the study as per the standard reporting form and must include the outcomes of the study (including any publications), any welfare issues that arose, and any deviations from the approved protocol (such as only partial completion).

Interim reports may be submitted at any time by the Principal Investigator, but may also be required as a condition of approval or requested by the Committee during the course of longer protocols. They may take the form of welfare monitoring of a new protocol or technique or reporting back on the findings of a specified aim or subsection of work.

#### 5.1.2. Compliance reporting

Principal investigators are responsible for reporting non-compliances or any unforeseen adverse events to the AEC as they occur so appropriate actions can be taken to prevent similar incidents in the project and future applications. Principal investigators are also expected to ensure that all animal statistics returns accurately reflect the impact grade experienced by the animals in the study.

#### 5.1.3. Compliance with other AECs

Where more than one organisation is involved in research, teaching and testing activities, the ultimate responsibility sits with the organisation that granted approval under its Code.

### 5.2. Appropriate qualifications

The Principal Investigator must provide to the AEC at the time of the application sufficient evidence of the experience of the personnel manipulating animals and undertaking experiments, or detail

plans for training users and accessing competency to ensure that the personnel undertaking manipulations are suitably trained for both the species and procedures to be used. The Principal Investigator or course organiser must accept primary responsibility for work undertaken, including the selection of an appropriate animal species, the choice of the number of subjects, the nature of the procedures and all matters related to the continuing welfare of the animals and their ultimate disposal according to the principles outlined in the CEC.

The AEC may at any time undertake monitoring to assess the competency of staff and students performing animal manipulations.

### **5.3. Sick and injured animals**

Where possible, sick or injured animals should immediately, according to circumstances, either receive appropriate veterinary care or be euthanized, although this may not be practicable for studies with wild animals. When untoward outcomes occur or unplanned euthanasia of animals is required or unplanned deaths of animals occur as a direct result of the research or teaching procedures, the outcomes must be reported in writing to the AEC as soon as practicable with a summary of the steps being taken to avoid further outcomes of this type. Frequency, responsibility for monitoring, and nature of checks are specified in approved protocols or SOPs. In addition to the monitoring specified in approvals, animals held in Animal Facilities should be monitored at least daily, either by researchers or suitably trained animal facility staff.

### **5.4. Standard operating procedures**

New or amended SOPs relating to standard operation of a facility or experimental procedures shall be submitted in writing to the AEC for evaluation. Approved SOPs will be added to the register of approved protocols and where appropriate, made available for reference to all animal users. Evaluation of SOPs may be done by the entire Committee or a nominated subcommittee.

### **5.5. Adverse events**

Where adverse events occur that impact on the welfare of the animals being manipulated and cared for, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to take immediate action to resolve the adverse event in consultation with a veterinarian as required.

Any unexpected or atypical incident that arises because of experimental manipulation, disease or routine husbandry must be communicated to the Chair or Secretary via an incident report form as soon as practicable, and the Principal Investigator if reported by another party. The Chair will evaluate incidents and determine the seriousness of the event. Minor incidents will be reported to the AEC along with any actions taken, such as additional observations or review of procedures, while more serious incidents may be escalated to a subcommittee or full AEC. Where an adverse event is deemed to be avoidable, the relevant procedures will be amended accordingly or a project may be halted after discussion with the Principal Investigator. Records of adverse incidents will be kept by the AEC.

In the event of a natural disaster, such as a flood, earthquake or fire, the University or the affected facility will enact its emergency management plan to ensure the welfare of the animals held as soon as it is safely possible.

## **5.6. Record keeping**

Records maintained by the AEC relevant to its approvals, operations, and functions under the Animal Welfare (Records and Statistics) Regulations 1999 shall be stored by the Secretary digitally on the University's SharePoint site or secure servers for at least the minimum period specified in the Act. Records kept should include (but are not limited to) project applications, approvals, policies, project monitoring, procedures, site visits, and complaints log.

## **5.7. Euthanasia for tissue collection/dissection**

Where animals are being euthanized for the purpose of tissue collection/dissection, the AEC requires that all euthanasia conforms to current approved SOPs for animal euthanasia. All killing of animals for the collection of tissue (not otherwise manipulated as part of a larger ethics approval) requires ethical approval, however, opportunistic collection of surplus tissue for another use from animals killed as a part of an approved application does not require additional AEC approval.

## **5.8. Rehoming**

Rehoming of eligible animals bred in captivity is at the discretion of the relevant Animal Facility staff provided they are satisfied that ongoing care of the rehomed animals is appropriate. Animals raised in a registered Containment Facility are not eligible for rehoming due to regulatory controls imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency under Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO) approvals. AEC approval to rehome animals is not required. The AEC will be informed on an annual basis of the total number of type of animals that are rehomed.

# 6. Animal Facilities

## **6.1. Management of Animal Facilities**

### 6.1.1. Policies and Procedures

All animal facilities overseen by the AEC must have a quality management plan (QMP) outlining the management of the facility and its general operation such that its operation is in accordance with good practice. The AEC reserves the right to request and review the QMP and SOPs for the operation of animal facilities overseen by the AEC.

### 6.1.2. Emergency Management

Animal facility QMP must include an emergency management plan that outlines the steps that will be taken in an emergency event. Emergency plans must at a minimum include fire, earthquake, flood, water or power outages, and critical staff shortages.

## **6.2. Development of SOPs for facility management**

New or revised SOPs for facility operation should be sent to the AEC Secretary for review by the SOP Subcommittee or the full Committee.

## **6.3. Transportation of animals**

Where animals are transported as part of work approved by the AEC, Principal Investigators must ensure that animals are transported in containers that are purpose-built for their type of species and meet recommended international best practice (International Air Transport Association Live Animals Regulations). Transportation of animals must also align with the Code of Welfare Transport of Animals within New Zealand, approved SOPs, approved applications, and any other applicable regulatory standards which may apply (HSNO approvals).

#### **6.4. Housing of animals**

Animals must be housed in a way that ensures their general health is safeguarded, and undue stress is avoided. Housing must comply with the relevant Code of Welfare and should follow the NAEAC Good Practice Guide where practicable. Sufficient space, according to the species, should be allocated for each animal and wherever possible animals will be provided with enrichment. Environmental needs such as appropriate temperature, humidity, ventilation, lighting, handling, and social interaction should also be consistent with the needs of the species concerned. Animals must receive a supply of food appropriate to their requirements and the quality and quantity required to preserve their health, with free access to water, unless the object of the experiment is to study the effects of variation in these nutritional requirements. Deviations from these requirements for research or teaching must be justified and approved by the AEC as part of a protocol.

The AEC must be satisfied that facilities are adequate to allow for the general health and welfare of the animals at all times, and that the personnel have the appropriate training and expertise to care for the animals.

#### **6.5. Monitoring Animal Facilities**

The AEC or its appointed representative shall have the right at any time to inspect the facilities in which the animals are housed as specified in section 7. Any member of the University or other persons may bring to the attention of the AEC any concern regarding compliance with the CEC. A written record of all inspections will be kept by the AEC. Facility inspections will be conducted annually at a minimum.

Any member of the AEC can request access to animals or facilities at any time, subject to the approval of the Chair. Facilities will be inspected routinely, and a report supplied to the AEC. The AEC can require a Principal Investigator to either modify (as directed by the AEC) or stop their teaching or research program involving live animal usage if appropriate procedures are not in place.

The AEC can require an Animal Facility to make changes to the way it operates for the welfare of animals housed in the facility. Any noted issues or requested corrective actions, including those corrected by AEC or facility staff at the time of the inspection, will be notified to facility staff and the AEC through email or the annual inspection report. Where corrective actions are required facility staff are expected to inform the AEC of what the actions have been taken and if appropriate, what mitigations have been put in place to avoid further non-compliances.



## 7. Monitoring

### 7.1. Monitoring during the approval period

The AEC or its appointed representative has the power to inspect all animals, records, animal treatments, and animal facilities as part of monitoring of an approved protocol. The AEC requires animal users to keep records of animal health and manipulations and the AEC reserves the right to review such records at any time. Between meetings, this power is vested in the Chair or his/her nominee. The minimum frequency of monitoring of approved protocols is grade dependent as noted in section 7.3, but may be carried out more frequently for assurance purposes.

The Veterinarians on the Committee may at their own discretion or at the direction of the AEC undertake monitoring of procedures and techniques for the purpose of assessing competency of researchers or welfare of the animals. Any monitoring shall be reported back to the AEC in a written report and the records kept on file.

These conditions also apply to parented organisations using the VUW CEC.

### 7.2. Monitoring by proxy

The AEC may appoint representatives to act on its behalf for monitoring procedures taking place in animal facilities or in field locations. Personnel carrying out proxy monitoring for the AEC must be deemed sufficiently knowledgeable of the procedures that they will be monitoring as judged by the membership of the Committee. Where a delegated authority is nominated by the AEC to provide this monitoring function, this must be recorded in writing. Where personnel act as a proxy for the Committee, they must be notified in advance to Animal Facility staff or PIs undertaking fieldwork. Proxy representatives must report monitoring activities back to the AEC.

### 7.3. Frequency of monitoring

The AEC may elect to undertake inspections of animal facilities or site visits to evaluate investigator competency at its discretion. Site visits may be initiated by a number of events, including, but not limited to:

- a. receipt of complaints;
- b. at the request of the AEC when evaluating a protocol, modification, or report;
- c. at the request of the Secretary/Chair/IDAO Veterinarian for routine evaluation of the facility;
- d. at the request of a member of the AEC.

### 7.4. Monitoring of manipulations Grade A & B

The AEC will monitor a minimum of 10% of all approved projects graded A or B. Investigators shall report any unanticipated welfare concerns back to the AEC as they arise to allow the Committee to reassess the project as required. All monitoring reports shall be provided to the AEC.

### **7.5. Monitoring of Manipulation Grade C-E**

The AEC will monitor, at least once during the lifetime of the project, all grade D or higher protocols. Additionally the AEC will also monitor a minimum of 50% of all projects of impact grade C approved prior to 2024. From 2024 onwards, all new approvals of impact grade C, or higher, will be monitored. Monitoring may include requests for interim reports and site visits to evaluate the currently conducted experiments. All monitoring reports shall be provided to the AEC.

### **7.6. Specific Manipulations**

The AEC may request to observe specific activities or manipulations carried out as part of an approved amendment, either as a condition of approval, or as part of its routine monitoring program. Where a technique is particularly new or invasive, the AEC may request the manipulation be trialled first as a pilot study before incorporation into a larger protocol.

### **7.7. End of Approval Reporting**

At the completion of an approved project, the Principal Investigator will, unless directed otherwise by the AEC, complete and return a final report within 3 months for the project specifying the outcomes of the project, any animal welfare concerns, and stating any improvements that could be made for future manipulations of the same nature. Where final reports are not submitted on time the AEC may elect to reject any future applications from a Principal Investigator until a satisfactory report is supplied.

### **7.8. End of Approval Grading**

Grading of animal returns at completion of the project should record the actual manipulation grade experienced by the animals in the study, not what was approved in the original design. Investigators should inform the AEC if manipulation grades vary from what was originally approved by the AEC.

### **7.9. Compliance breaches**

All University personnel must, whether directly involved in the conduct of a project or not, inform the AEC if a suspected breach of the Code is detected. A log of non-compliances are kept as part of the AECs records. The Chair or a nominated AEC member will investigate a non-compliance, and may conduct further monitoring, and issue requests for corrective actions as appropriate.

### **7.10. Non-compliance with an AEC approval**

The AEC Chair or nominated AEC member will investigate suspected or alleged non-compliance of an approved protocol by an individual(s). Logs of non-compliances are kept as part of the AEC's records. Where appropriate, the AEC may issue requests for corrective actions, increase frequency of monitoring, impose additional controls on a protocol, and if necessary, refer transgressions to the university disciplinary council, or in the case of a parented organisation, to the managing director of the parented organisation. The AEC may choose to cancel or suspend any additional protocols issued to person(s) involved in non-compliance, and may also refuse future applications submitted by the relevant investigator. In some circumstances, on the advice of the Code holder, an offence may also be reported to the appropriate animal welfare compliance agency.

### **7.11. Non-compliance with legislation or regulations (including non-compliance with this CEC)**

The AEC may refer non-compliance with legislation or regulations to the university disciplinary council, or in the case of a parented organisation, to the managing director of the parented organisation. In some circumstances, on the advice of the Code holder, an offence may also be reported to the appropriate animal welfare compliance agency.

### **7.12. End of approval statistics**

At the completion of an approved project, the Principal Investigator must return, in conjunction with the final report, a completed animal statistics form to the AEC specifying animal numbers used and the impact grades. External parties using the VUW CEC, with approval from the AEC, may elect to collect and report animal statistics separately from VUW; however, any such information shall be supplied to the AEC at the time of the annual return to MPI. Where animal statistics information is not supplied in a timely fashion (within three months of the formal completion date), the undue delay may be dealt with as misconduct under the VUW Animal Ethics Policy or as a non-compliance with the original AEC approval.

## **8. Arrangements for External Parties to Use the CEC and AEC**

The AEC may on occasion enter a parenting arrangement with external organisations to act under the VUW CEC. Such arrangements with outside organisations shall be considered on a case-by-case basis with the financial arrangements dealt with by the Code holder. The AEC will accept such arrangements only if it believes the Committee has the appropriate expertise to review the application. The conditions for monitoring of animal manipulations, as set out by the AEC, need to be outlined by the external party and judged as satisfactory by the VUW AEC.

An external applicant shall be required to complete the standard animal use application form, but submission must be through a VUW Principal Investigator. Sufficient information must be provided to the AEC prior to work with Animals to satisfy the AEC that the external party has the training and experience to conduct animal research with the indicated species to ensure animal welfare. Members of the AEC shall perform local supervision. Proxy monitoring may be by arrangement with personnel contracted to act on behalf of the AEC. Such contracted personnel shall have appropriate qualifications and experience, as determined by the AEC, to be able to satisfactorily monitor manipulations performed on animals. The SOPs of parented organisations must be submitted for review by the AEC. Formal written reports shall be used to document all monitoring activity of the organisations contracted out by the AEC.

All arrangements by external parties to use the VUW CEC shall be notified in writing to MPI before the external party begins any research, teaching or testing using animals. Notification should include the name of the person or organisation, postal and physical addresses of the parented organisation and contact details for the person to whom correspondence should be addressed. Such outside organisations shall comply with the CEC, and the arrangement must be re-confirmed when a new CEC is approved.

## 9. Complaints Procedures

Note: Maximum penalties for individual and corporate offences against the Animal Welfare Act 1999, the Animal Welfare (Records and Statistics) Regulations 1999 and other legislation and regulations that apply to the use of animals for research, testing and teaching are included in the text of each Act and Regulation.

### 9.1. Animal welfare complaints

All complaints must be made in writing to the Chair, Secretary, or Code holder. Actions taken because of a complaint shall be recorded. Summaries of complaints are communicated to the Code holder or their representative.

#### 9.1.1. Complaints by the public

Animal welfare complaints received by the AEC from members of the public, shall be considered by the Chair and Secretary who may consult with the members of the AEC and take action as appropriate. If the matter cannot be resolved within the Committee, it shall be reported to the Code holder or their representative.

#### 9.1.2. Complaints made by employees

Animal welfare complaints received by the AEC from employees, shall be considered by the Chair who may consult with the members of the AEC as appropriate, and may call a special meeting of the AEC to resolve the matter. If the matter cannot be resolved within the Committee, it shall be reported to the Code holder or their representative. Where possible the AEC shall treat complaints as confidential.

#### 9.1.3. Complaints made by AEC members

Animal welfare complaints from AEC members shall be considered by the Chair or deputy Chair who may consult with the members of the AEC as appropriate and may call a special meeting of the AEC to resolve the matter. Complaints raised by the AEC should be notified to the Code holder or their representative along with actions taken to resolve the issue.

#### 9.1.4. Breaches of the Act

Serious breaches of the Animal Welfare Act, such that may result in prosecution, shall be communicated to the code Holder and MPI for advice on further actions to be taken by the University and AEC, such as education and evidence collection. Serious breaches must be communicated as soon as practicable.

### 9.2. Procedural complaints

#### 9.2.1. Complaints by applicants

Any applicant who wishes to make a complaint should do so in writing to the AEC Secretary for consideration by the AEC Chair and deputy Chair. Procedural complaints may be raised at the next regular meeting of the AEC. Where a complaint is deemed valid, the AEC may seek guidance from

the Code Holder or their representative to ensure a fair, prompt resolution to the complaint. Actions taken as a response to a complaint will be recorded in the Committee minutes.

#### 9.2.2. Complaints by AEC members

Any member of the AEC who believes that the AEC itself or the Code holder is failing to comply with the Act, regulations under the Act, or the CEC may lodge a formal complaint in writing to the Chair or to the Code holder or their representative. Complaints by AEC members to the Chair will always be communicated to the Code Holder or their representative who may take legal advice on any further actions to be taken. In exceptional circumstances a report may be made directly to the Director-General, MPI, as detailed in section 103 of the Animal Welfare Act.

#### 9.2.3. Complaints against the Chair or Secretary

A complaint made concerning the Chair or the Secretary should be reported directly to the Code holder. Where applicable, the Code holder or their representative may choose to handle a complaint through the University's existing policies (e.g. Staff Conduct Policy, Academic Grievance Policy, Conflicts of Interest Statute, Fraud Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, Whistle-blower Policy, etc.), or as deemed appropriate if the complaint falls outside of standard policy. Complaints made to the Code holder may be reported back to the AEC subject to legal advice.

## 10. Process to Amend, Suspend or Revoke the CEC

Amendments to the CEC shall be subject to the approval of the Director-General of MPI (as required in accordance with the Act). The AEC, through the Chair, has the right to recommend to the Code holder that amendments be made to the CEC, with notification sent to MPI for approval of any such amendments. Changes to the CEC are communicated to staff working with Animals via email and are posted to the University's website.

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