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SECTION: Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Protocol for Reporting Misuse of Animals

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Policy for: Columbia and Regional Campuses
Procedure for: Columbia and Regional Campuses
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I. Policy

A. Under the Animal Welfare Act, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is given the function of reviewing and investigating concerns involving animal care resulting from complaints by University personnel or the public. The IACUC is obligated to assess the validity of and to respond in an appropriate manner to claims of disregard for the welfare of laboratory animals. Any misuse of laboratory animals, whether intentional or unwitting, shall be addressed.

B. Charges of animal misuse can damage an individual's career, seriously hamper research progress, and create volatile public reaction. Therefore, charges must be handled in a professional and confidential manner. The least number of persons necessary should be involved at any stage of the procedure. Any inquiry or investigation must be handled promptly and expeditiously and with full attention to the rights of all individuals involved. Persons conducting the investigation must possess the special knowledge necessary to judge the situation but also must have no immediate personal interest in the case.

C. The IACUC is given responsibility for handling charges of animal misuse in an expedient, just, and appropriate manner, with regard for the protection of both the person(s) being accused and the person(s) submitting the allegations.

D. Persons making wrongful allegations of animal misuse with malicious or vengeful intent or persons taking wrongful action against the accuser because of such allegations, are **SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA.**

II. Procedure

These procedures are designed to recognize the difficulty in determining the extent of animal misuse. The process of inquiry and investigation should be sufficiently flexible to be

terminated when it becomes clear that charges are unjustified or that the issue can be resolved appropriately by other means.

A. Reporting Procedure

1. Any faculty member, student, staff member or other individual who suspects that animal misuse has occurred has an obligation to report that suspicion to the veterinarian in charge of USC's animal facilities. Alternatively, reports should be made to the chairman or some other member of the USC IACUC. It is preferred that reports be made in writing and signed, but anonymous reports will be accepted and acted upon. Such reports will be afforded the strictest confidentiality.
2. The identity of the person making the report will not necessarily be concealed, since this person may be an important witness in an investigation.
3. Once an allegation has been made, the USC IACUC will act in a manner which protects the reputation and well-being of both the accused and the accuser.

B. Investigation

1. An investigation committee will be established by the IACUC chairman consisting of, at a minimum, the IACUC chairman or his/her designee, the USC veterinarian, and one IACUC member unaffiliated with the University. The investigation committee will make a preliminary review to a) exclude frivolous accusations and b) to determine the extent of alleged animal misuse.
2. The person accused of animal misuse must be given an opportunity to answer the charges at this time.
3. If necessary, appropriate measures should be instituted to eliminate immediately any ongoing animal misuse.
4. Any other persons with relevant information should be interviewed at this time.
5. If the IACUC investigation committee decides that there are no grounds for a charge of animal misuse and no further inquiry is necessary, a written report should be filed with the IACUC. A copy of the report will be kept in a permanent, confidential file with the Institutional Official (IO). The accuser and the accused will be notified of the outcome of the investigation. The case is then considered closed.
6. If the IACUC investigation committee determines that animal misuse has occurred, a report to the full IACUC is mandatory.
7. Investigation of animal misuse allegations should be completed within 30 calendar days of the initial allegation.

8. In unusual circumstances where additional time is required to review the issues involved, the investigation committee shall keep a written record of the cause for delay. Any delay beyond 60 calendar days shall be reported to the Institutional Official.

C. Action by IACUC

1. In cases where animal misuse has occurred, the full IACUC committee will consider the report of the investigation committee to determine appropriate action. Consideration will be given to the following actions by IACUC:

- a. Require appropriate training and corrective action prior to continued use of laboratory animals by the persons involved in animal misuse.
- b. Halt all further acquisition and use of laboratory animals by persons involved in animal misuse.
- c. Notification of the Institutional Official and the Office of Research Compliance when Sponsoring agency funds are involved. This office will file additional reports to relevant sponsoring agencies as required.
- d. If misuse is judged as willful and serious and where the intent of the misuse warrants, referral of case for consideration by the USC scientific misconduct process.
- e. Rejection of investigation committee's determination that animal misuse has occurred.

2. A final report of committee action in each case will be kept in a permanent, confidential file with the IACUC and with the Institutional Official. The accused and the accuser will be notified of the final IACUC decision.
