

NATIONAL HEALTH & MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (NH&MRC)

Statement on Animal Experimentation

The policy of the Council regarding animal experimentation and the production, provision and care of experimental animals is set out in detail in the publication, Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Experimental Purposes in Australia, NH&MRC/CSIRO/Australian Agricultural Council, 1984. Applicants for NH&MRC Grants must accept the following Guidelines and are referred to the above publication for further details.

These Guidelines are based on the principle that animals are treated with respect and care, and that consideration of their welfare is an essential factor in determining their use in experiments. Accordingly, animal experimentation should be performed only to obtain and establish significant scientific information relevant to the understanding of man and animals, to animal production, to the continued maintenance and improvement of the health and well-being of man and animals, or to achieve educational objectives where the use of animals is unavoidable.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CARE AND USE OF ANIMALS FOR EXPERIMENTAL PURPOSES

- The requirements of Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation must be observed for the acquisition, transport, production, housing, care and use of animals for experimental purposes, including scientific research, procedures not primarily of a research nature such as toxicity testing an diagnosis, and in teaching.
- Institutions and organisations using animals for experimental purposes must establish Committees which function as Animal Experimentation Ethics Committees (AEEC) to ensure that all animal use conforms with standards of animal care as set out in the above Code.
- Proposals for animal experimentation must be submitted to an AEEC for consideration of both its ethical aspects and its scientific or educational merit.
- Experimentation must not commence until written approval has been obtained from the AEEC.
- Projects should be designed to ensure the most effective scientific use of the least number of animals and alternatives to the use of animals considered wherever possible.
- The senior investigator of each approved experimental project has the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of all animals used in the project.
- Animals should be housed, fed, watered, handled and transported under conditions of minimal discomfort and stress, under the care of qualified and experienced staff.
- Procedures which are liable to cause pain of more than trivial extent, or those other than a routine husbandry nature carried out in accordance with accepted farming practice, must not be carried out with anaesthesia which is adequate and appropriate for that species of animal and is administered for the duration of the procedure.
- Neuromuscular blocking agents must not be used without appropriate general anaesthesia, except in animals where sensory awareness has been eliminated. If such agents are used, continuous or frequent intermittent monitoring of paralysed animals is essential to ensure that the depth of anaesthesia is adequate to prevent pain or distress.
- Experimental procedures carried out on anaesthetised animals which do not require recovery must be terminated by killing the animals under anaesthesia.
- When recovery from anaesthesia is required for the purpose of experimentation, animals must be killed humanely and immediately if pain and distress cannot be relieved.
- In procedures such as toxicological, pathogenetic, behavioural and animal production studies in which anaesthesia or analgesia are neither appropriate nor practicable, the degree of discomfort or stress to which animals are subjected must be minimised. In such studies, the use of death as an experimental end point should be avoided where possible.