

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE
Terms of Reference

The Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) is responsible for overseeing the ethical use of animals in research, teaching or testing carried out by personnel at or affiliated with the University of Lethbridge; and for working with animal users, animal care personnel and the University administration to be satisfied that all animal use within their jurisdiction is in compliance with University, municipal, federal and provincial regulations, and CCAC guidelines.

1. Reporting

The AWC reports directly to the Vice President (Research) who is responsible for the University's animal care and use program.

2. Authority

The AWC has the authority, on behalf of the University to:

- a) Ensure that any objectionable procedures be stopped if, in consultation with the University Veterinarian, it considers that unnecessary pain and distress is being experienced by an animal.
- b) Ensure that any use of animals be stopped that, by deviating from the approved protocol, causes the animals to experience undue pain and distress.
- c) Ensure that an animal be euthanized if, in consultation with the University Veterinarian, it feels that pain or distress caused to the animal cannot be alleviated.

The AWC Chair and the University Veterinarian must have access at all times to all areas where animals are or may be held or used. The AWC delegates to the University Veterinarian the authority to treat, remove from a study, or euthanize, if necessary, an animal according to the University Veterinarian's professional judgment. The University Veterinarian will attempt to contact the animal user whose animal is in poor condition before beginning any treatment that has not previously been agreed upon. The University Veterinarian has the authority to proceed with any necessary emergency measures, whether or not the animal user is available. The University Veterinarian will submit a written report to the animal user and to the AWC following any such event.

The AWC is the body responsible for determining and working to correct breaches of compliance with approved animal welfare protocols and standard operating procedures. As the AWC is generally not present when animal welfare protocols are being undertaken, it must work with the members of the veterinary and animal care staff to ensure compliance with its decisions and with the conditions set out in approved protocols. The veterinary and animal care staff must work in a collegial manner with animal users and attempt to correct deficiencies collaboratively.

Where there are breaches of compliance or threats to the health and safety of personnel or animals, these must be reported back to the AWC Chair at which time further action will be determined. All must work in a collegial and respectful manner to attempt to correct deficiencies collaboratively. Breaches of compliance that cannot be corrected by the AWC working with the concerned animal users and veterinary/animal care staff must be referred to the senior administration, which must inform all members of the animal care and use program about sanctions that will be taken by the administration in the event of serious breaches of compliance.

3. Membership & Meetings

The composition of the AWC is as follows:

- a) Three faculty members (one from Biological Sciences, one from Psychology, and one from Neuroscience), experienced in animal care and use with collective knowledge respectively in the following areas: aquatic animal research, field research, and invasive procedures with non-human mammals, who may or may not be actively using animals during their term on the AWC - one of these faculty members will be appointed as the AWC chair;
- b) The University Veterinarian (*ex officio*), experienced in experimental animal care and use and serving the role of Director of Animal Care Services overseeing the operations of the animal facilities;
- c) One faculty member whose normal activities, past or present, do not depend on or involve animal use for research, teaching or testing, and who would normally be from a Department not using animals;
- d) One or two person(s) representing community interests and concerns, who has had no affiliation with the University, and who has not been involved in animal use for research, teaching or testing;
- e) Technical staff representatives from each animal facility (i.e. the Rodent Research Facility and the Aquatic Research Facility);
- f) A Safety Services representative;
- g) A graduate student representative to represent student interests and concerns;
- h) The AWC Coordinator (*ex officio*)

In order to avoid potential conflicts of interest with review of animal welfare protocols submitted by designated AWC members, the Departments involved in animal use (Biological Sciences, Psychology, and Neuroscience) will nominate alternates for their Departmental representatives, who will attend meetings to serve as Departmental experts as necessary in the place of designated AWC members.

Faculty members from the Departments involved in animal use will be nominated by their Department. The Department Chair will forward the names of nominees to the Vice President (Research). With the exception of those designated *ex-officio*, AWC members are appointed by the Vice President Research for two-year alternating terms, with terms staggered to provide continuity. Normally, terms may be renewed once.

Normally, the AWC will elect a Chair for a two year term, with the possibility of re-appointment. The Chair shall not be an *ex-officio* member, not be directly involved with the management of the University's animal facilities, not be a clinical veterinarian for the University, not be an animal health or veterinary personnel member charged with ensuring compliance with CCAC guidelines, and not be involved in the preparation of a significant number of the protocols to be reviewed by the AWC.

The AWC Coordinator supports the AWC by ensuring that animal welfare protocols are well managed; coordinating meetings and activities of the AWC and its subcommittees; ensuring that Committee minutes and reports are promptly produced and distributed; that all exchanges between the AWC, its subcommittees, and animal users are well-documented and managed; and that animal users and AWC members are provided with necessary information to operate in accordance with CCAC and University policies, practices, and procedures as they pertain to the animal care and use program.

Quorum = 50% + 1, and shall include the AWC Chair or designate, the University Veterinarian, a Community Representative, and the AWC Coordinator. Meetings will take place on a monthly basis, with the exception of August.

In addition, the AWC will regularly (at least once a year) visit all animal care facilities and areas in which animals are used or housed, in order to better understand the work being conducted within the University, to meet with those working in the animal facilities to discuss their needs, to monitor animal-based work according to approved protocols and standard operating procedures, to assess any weaknesses in the facilities and to forward any recommendations or commendations to the person(s) responsible for the facilities and for animal use. Each member of the AWC will participate in some of the facility visits on an annual basis.

Visits of the animal facilities should be documented through the AWC minutes or written reports. Those responsible for the animal facilities should respond to any AWC recommendations in writing, and site visit reports should be followed up on jointly by the senior administration and the AWC.

4. Responsibilities of the AWC

It is the responsibility of the AWC to:

- a) Ensure that any animal use in research, teaching, or testing does not commence without prior AWC approval of a written animal welfare protocol, and that no animals are acquired or used before such approval is issued.
- b) Ensure that any animal use for breeding purposes or for eventual use in research, teaching or testing projects does not commence without prior AWC approval of a written animal welfare protocol, except where current CCAC guidelines provide for exemptions.

- c) Ensure that the ethical review and assessment of all written animal welfare protocols is based on provision of all required information, as identified in the *CCAC guidelines on: animal use protocol review* and in the *CCAC Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees*, in *The University of Lethbridge Animal Welfare Approval Form* by animal users. The information must be clearly presented in a form that all members of the AWC can readily understand.
- d) Ensure that there is evidence of scientific merit through independent peer review for each research project involving animal use, prior to AWC approval. In the absence of evidence of scientific merit, the VP Research is responsible for ensuring that an independent peer review for scientific merit is obtained.
- e) Ensure that there is evidence of course specific review with respect to the pedagogical merit of using live animals for each teaching program involving animal use, prior to AWC approval. Departmental curriculum committees can be called upon to provide a review of pedagogical merit to the AWC.
- f) Ensure that the ethical review and assessment of all written animal welfare protocols is conducted with particular emphasis on the *CCAC policy statement on: ethics of animal investigation* and *CCAC guidelines on: animal use protocol review* as well as on all other relevant CCAC guidelines, policy statements, and further supporting documentation from the investigator/teacher, as necessary, and ensure that all procedures comply with CCAC guidelines, and, if at variance with those guidelines, require justification for the variance on scientific grounds. Protocol authors are asked to refer to the guidelines for submission of a new animal welfare protocol for ethics review that are posted at <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/animal-ethics-guidelines-forms> where the University protocol review process is defined.
- g) Ensure that animal users update their protocols with any modifications they intend to make, and that AWC approval of any modifications to a protocol is in place prior to their implementation. The AWC must also ensure that animal users report any unanticipated problems or complications, as well as the steps that have been taken to address the problem(s) to the AWC. Animal users are asked to refer to the guidelines for submission of an amendment to an existing animal welfare protocol for ethics review that are posted at <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/animal-ethics-guidelines-forms> where the University amendment review process is defined.
- h) Ensure that all protocols are reviewed annually, and require the submission of a new protocol after a maximum of three consecutive renewals. Animal users are asked to refer to the guidelines for submission of a new animal welfare protocol for ethics review that are posted at <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/research/animal-ethics-guidelines-forms> where the annual review process is defined under the conditions of approval for a new animal welfare protocol.
- i) Ensure that all AWC discussions and decisions are thoroughly documented in the Committee minutes and in supporting documentation for animal welfare protocols, and that the minutes are forwarded to the senior administrator responsible for animal care and use.

- j) Ensure that an institutional appeal mechanism that can be used by the author of a protocol in the event that animal use is not approved by the AWC is defined. Appellants are referred to the VP Research for the University appeal process (see appended).
- k) Ensure that all AWC members and animal users have the opportunity to become familiar with the CCAC Guide and *CCAC policy statement on: ethics of animal investigation* and all other CCAC guidelines and policy statements, federal, provincial or municipal statutes that may apply, as well as University requirements.
- l) Ensure appropriate care of animals in all stages of their life and in all experimental conditions is in place and that veterinary care is available and based on the elements contained in the *CALAM/ACMAL Standards of Veterinary Care* of the Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine (2004).
- m) Ensure that unnecessary pain or distress, and animal stress and injuries are avoided; the proper and effective use of anesthesia and analgesia; the provision of appropriate post-operative care; and that all due consideration is given to animal welfare, including environmental enrichment, through the establishment of procedures that are commensurate with current veterinary standards.
- n) Ensure that policies to provide for a system of animal care that will meet the needs of the University are established and implemented, and that they include the elements identified in the *CCAC Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees*.
- o) Ensure that animal care and use takes place in practice according to AWC decisions and institutional and CCAC standards by establishing procedures for post-approval monitoring of animal welfare protocols, and that the roles and responsibilities of the members of the animal care and use program are defined in the monitoring process.
- p) Ensure that the use of pilot studies with few animals is encouraged when new approaches, methods or products are being tried. The AWC must also ensure that animal users report on the results of any pilot studies, no matter whether they wish to pursue the study immediately or not.
- q) Ensure that as much information as possible is provided to the AWC in terms of any expected effects on animal health and welfare in the case of projects involving proprietary or patentable research or testing. The AWC must insist on close monitoring of the health and welfare of animals in such projects.

In general, the AWC is also responsible for:

- r) Regular review (at least every three years) of (1) its Terms of Reference to meet new CCAC guidelines or policies and changing needs within the University, the scientific community, the animal welfare community and society as a whole; (2) the security of the animals and research facilities; (3) standard operating procedures (SOPs), including full AWC review of SOPs that involve procedures that may result in deleterious effects to animal health or welfare, and University animal care and use policies; and (4) policies and procedures for monitoring of animal care and experimental procedures within the University.

AWC Terms of Reference

Date of Last Review: March 29, 2023

- s) Maintaining a liaison with the CCAC Secretariat, and informing the Secretariat of any major changes to the University animal care and use program, such as a change in the senior administrator responsible for the animal care and use program, the AWC Chair, or the University Veterinarian.
- t) Submission of complete and accurate animal use information in the *CCAC Animal Use Date Form* (AUDF) format for all protocols annually and also in pre-assessment documentation.
- u) Development of a crisis management program for the animal facilities and for the animal care and use program, in conjunction with any general University crisis management plan(s), that details plans in the event of power outages (short and prolonged), work stoppages, fires, natural disasters, large chemical spills and other similar crises, and includes a communications plan for addressing public and media inquiries on concerns related to animal use.

In addition, the AWC should:

- v) From time to time, sponsor seminars or workshops on the use of animals in science and the ethics of animal experimentation, and encourage as many animal users, animal caregivers, students, AWC members and other interested parties to attend as possible.
- w) Try to achieve and maintain a high profile within the University and in the community in order to demonstrate the University's effort in promoting animal welfare and to allay some of the public concerns regarding animal experimentation.
- x) Be open to participation in a constructive dialogue with animal welfare organizations.

5. Responsibilities of the University/Senior Administration

It is the responsibility of the University/Senior Administration to:

- a) Ensure that the AWC has a high profile and is well respected within the University, and that all AWC members and the AWC Chair are valued and recognized.
- b) Ensure that all animal users and caregivers are informed of and comply with University animal care and use policies and procedures. This may include, but is not limited to, ensuring the accessibility of guidelines for submissions of new animal welfare protocols and amendments, University animal care and use policies and procedures, and other reference materials as they relate to the use of animals in research, teaching and testing.
- c) Ensure that animal care and use takes place in practice according to AWC decisions and University and CCAC standards. This responsibility is shared with the AWC, animal users, the University Veterinarian and animal care staff.
- d) Ensure that there is a mechanism in place to ensure that the proposed animal-based work has merit, if the review is not carried out by an external, peer review agency, before it is given final approval by the AWC. The mechanism through which non-peer-reviewed projects are reviewed for their scientific or pedagogical merit may involve calling upon

the expertise of individual independent peers or by making use of scientific committees or advisory boards.

- e) Ensure that there is an appeal mechanism in place to address the eventuality of an animal user disagreeing with an AWC decision despite extensive discussions and attempts to find agreement. This mechanism should include appropriate expertise and ensure a separate, fair and impartial process.
- f) Ensure that AWC members are provided with training opportunities to understand their work and role. These must include at least a formal orientation session to introduce new AWC members to the University's animal care and use program and its members, policies and procedures, as well as to the animal facilities and to CCAC guidelines and policies. Ongoing opportunities to better understand animal care and use in science should also be provided.

Animal Welfare Committee Appeal Procedure

1.0 Introduction

In cases where a Principal Investigator (PI) would like to appeal a decision of the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC), the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) policy statement on: *Terms of Reference for Animal Care Committees (ACC)* states in section 3.i that one of the responsibilities of the ACC is to “define an institutional appeal mechanism that can be used by the author of a protocol in the event that animal use is not approved by the ACC. This mechanism should include appropriate expertise and ensure a separate, fair and impartial process. The CCAC may be called upon for information purposes; however, appeals cannot be directed to the CCAC.”

2.0 Purpose:

To detail the procedure to be followed in the event of an appeal of an AWC decision.

3.0 Procedure for Appeal of an AWC Decision:

3.1 If all reasonable attempts to resolve disagreements cooperatively between a PI and the AWC have been exhausted, the PI may appeal an AWC decision to the Vice-President (Research).

3.1.1 An appeal of an AWC decision shall be made, in writing, to the Vice-President (Research) by the appellant within 30 working days of receipt of the written decision by the AWC.

3.2 The appellant and the AWC Chair will be invited to meet with the Vice-President (Research) in order to resolve the outstanding issues.

3.2.1 The Vice-President (Research) shall meet with the appellant and the AWC Chair within 10 working days of receipt of the written request from the appellant.

3.2.2 In the event the Vice-President (Research) is not available within this time period, the Associate Vice-President (Research) shall meet with the appellant and the AWC Chair.

3.2.2 In the event that the outstanding issues are resolved, the appeal shall be discharged.

3.3 If the appellant and the AWC, in consultation with the Vice-President (Research), are unable to come to an acceptable resolution of the differences, the Vice-President (Research) will establish a balanced and impartial Animal Welfare Appeal Committee (AWAC) comprised of two animal user faculty members, one non-animal user faculty member, one person with relevant animal veterinary care experience with the species in the protocol under appeal, and a community representative to hear the appeal.

- 3.3.1 The AWAC members shall not be AWC members, and the person with relevant animal veterinary care experience shall be from outside the University.
 - 3.3.2 The AWAC members shall declare any conflict of interest that would preclude their ability to hear the appeal, and if so, shall not be appointed to the AWAC.
 - 3.3.3 The Vice-President (Research) shall appoint the Chair of the AWAC.
 - 3.3.4 Both the appellant and the AWC Chair may request that an AWAC member not be part of the appeal process on the ground that the member's presence would bias and prevent a fair hearing.
- 3.4 The AWAC Chair will contact the AWC Coordinator to obtain all documents and minutes of the AWC meeting(s) and decision related to the appeal.
- 3.5 Upon receipt of the documentation related to the appeal, the AWAC Chair will convene a meeting of the AWAC to hear the appeal, with provisions for presentations by the appellant and the AWC Chair.
- 3.5.1 The appellant will present the grounds for the appeal and speak to the issues.
 - 3.5.2 The AWC Chair will present the reasons for the decision of the AWC, and speak to the issues.
 - 3.5.3 The AWAC, having heard the oral presentations of the appellant and the AWC Chair and having reviewed the written and supporting documentation, shall, by unanimous vote, reach a decision before adjourning the appeal hearing.
 - 3.5.3.1 The AWAC discussion and decision shall take place after the appellant and the AWC Chair have been excused from the meeting after their oral presentations.
 - 3.5.4 The AWAC will meet to hear the appeal and render a decision within 30 working days of establishment of the AWAC by the Vice-President (Research).
- 3.6 The AWAC Chair will provide a written decision to the Vice-President (Research), within 10 working days of the appeal hearing.
- 3.6.1 The decision of the AWAC shall be considered final and binding.
- 3.7 The Vice-President (Research) shall communicate the decision of the AWAC to the appellant and the AWC Chair.