

## Appendix B: Use of Animals in Research – Responsibilities of Principal Investigators

### 1. Responsibilities of Principal Investigators

1.1 The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects of the welfare of animals as given in the *VUW Code of Ethical Conduct for the Use of Live Animals for Teaching and Research*. A selected summary of these explicit and implicit responsibilities is given below.

- (a) **Authorisation for Research:** It is the responsibility of the PI to obtain approval from the AEC before commencing any programme of research or teaching involving animals. Under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, this includes all live vertebrate animals (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish), as well as octopus, squid, crab, lobster, crayfish (including freshwater crayfish), or any other animals subject to manipulation as defined by the Act.
- (b) **Significance of Research:** The PI must continually reconsider the value of specific animal manipulations to the overall aim of the study before carrying out each series of experiments on animals.
- (c) **Consideration of Alternatives and Refinements:** If a suitable alternative to animal experimentation becomes available, the PI must consider whether to adopt the alternative in order to minimise the number of animals used. The PI must also be able to justify the continued use of animals in light of the new alternative. In addition, the PI should seek opportunities to refine procedures to reduce pain, distress, or lasting harm to animals, even when alternatives are not available.
- (d) **Notification of Changes in Procedure:** It is the responsibility of the PI to notify the AEC in advance of any modifications to an approved research programme. All amendments require approval. Major changes and higher impact manipulations require approval from the AEC at one of its scheduled meetings; therefore, projects should be planned well before the actual starting date.
- (e) **Training and Supervision of Co-Workers:** The PI is responsible for ensuring that all students, technicians, and collaborators are properly trained and suitably competent to carry out specific animal manipulations. Close personal supervision must be maintained until such time that **complete competence** has been attained. This is especially true for procedures involving anaesthesia, surgery, and post-operative care.

Training must be provided by someone appropriate competence in the relevant manipulation. If the PI's delegates training to another member of the team, they must ensure that the person delivering the training is competent to teach the technique.

An Animal Training Certificate must be completed for each investigator. The PI must also ensure that everyone connected with a project, including students, technicians, and collaborators, have read the *VUW Code of Ethical Conduct for the Use of Live Animals for Teaching and Research*, the ethics protocol, and are aware of their individual responsibilities for the welfare of animals they are using. **The ultimate responsibility, however, rests with the PI.**

- (f) **Study personnel:** The PI must ensure that all individuals conducting animal manipulations under an approved ethics protocol are either listed on the protocol or communicated to the AEC through a process agreed upon during the protocol's approval.
- (g) **Keeping of Records:** The PI is required to maintain accurate records of animal use throughout the project. On completion of the study, the actual numbers of animals used

must be submitted to the AEC within one month of the completion of the study, along with a Final Report detailing the results of the study. Under normal circumstances, the AEC will only liaise directly with the PI and not with other co-workers or students working under the PI's supervision.

- (h) **Publication of Results:** Approved research projects are expected to result in publication of results without undue delay in journals of international standing.
- (i) **Submission of List of Research Publications:** It is the responsibility of the PI to provide the AEC with a list of publications that arise from a project, even if that project is no longer in force.
- (j) **Respect for Animals:** Work done with animals within this University has the purpose of advancing and disseminating knowledge, and the animals are used and sometimes sacrificed to these serious ends. The Animal Ethics Committee expects that at all times, all animals (even after sacrifice) will be accorded respect in keeping with these ends.
- (k) **Cooperation with Monitoring Activities:** The PI must cooperate with any monitoring activities conducted by the AEC or its delegated representatives. This includes providing access to relevant records, facilities, and personnel, and responding to requests for information in a timely and transparent manner.
- (l) **Notification of Unexpected Adverse Events:** The PI is responsible for notifying the AEC as soon as practicable if any unexpected adverse events affecting animals occur during the study. The PI must provide sufficient detail to enable the AEC to assess the event and determine whether further action or protocol review is required.