

Guideline for Collecting and Releasing Animal Images and Audio Recordings

This guideline describes the proper procedures for collecting and releasing photographs, video, and audio recordings of animals (alive and dead), in animal facilities and animal laboratories at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Background:

There are scientific and clinical reasons for obtaining photographs, videos and recordings of animals and animal procedures in animal facilities and laboratories. These materials are useful for documenting clinical care, research, teaching or test results. Public access to these recordings is authorized through the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

[NIH Policy Manual Chapter 3047](#) states the, “use of audio, photography and video recording devices for imaging animals (including but not limited to cell phone cameras, digital/cassette dictation devices, cameras and video recording equipment) in NIH owned or leased animal facilities is strictly prohibited except in performance of approved IC Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) activities in the animal facility or animal laboratory, or with prior approval by the IC Animal Program Director, or designee, responsible for that specific animal facility or animal laboratory.”

[NIH Policy Manual Chapter 1184](#) states, “any presentation of information by an NIH employee on a work- related subject, . . . must be prepared according to accepted NIH standards; reviewed for substantive content . . . and administratively approved. This process both protects the public and the employee. The goal of review is to ensure that NIH releases the highest-quality information and to ensure the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of materials and products for each intended audience.”

Compliance with the Use of Media in the Animal Program:

All digital images and recordings of animals and animal procedures must be transferred and stored onto a secure password protected government computer server. The original recording must be deleted from the recording device immediately following transfer.

The IC Animal Program Director (APD) or their designee can assist the IC Scientific Director by ensuring best practices were used during media collection, and animal image modifications required as a condition of release and distribution approval were completed. In general, when taking photographs or videos:

- IC investigators should proactively involve their APD or their APD designee in the staging, content and review of the images, videos, and audio. IC investigators are responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions (including IC manuscript clearance) for animal images, videos, and audio.
- All recorded procedures should be performed according to an ACUC-approved Animal Study Proposal.
- IC ACUCs should establish guidance on appropriate staging and content of animal images, videos, and audio to include:
 - Personnel captured in images are wearing the facility-approved personal protective equipment (PPE) and modeling proper handling and restraint methods.

- Personnel and animal facility images do not show articles indicating the location and identity of the animal facility, personnel, or animals.
- Animal procedure recordings show clean surroundings; and any images of cages or pens show clean accessories, full water bottles, and stocked feed containers.
- Only the area of interest of the animal necessary for the procedure is shown rather than the entire animal.
- No extraneous comments or excessive background noises are recorded.
- Only strict aseptic technique is used.

References:

1. [NIH Manual Chapter 3047: Trans-NIH Animal Facility Security Program](#)
2. [NIH Manual Chapter 2809: NIH Social and New Media Policy](#)
3. [NIH Manual Chapter 1184: Preparation and Clearance of Scientific, Technical, and Public Information Presented by NIH Employees or Produced for Distribution by NIH](#)
4. [NIH Manual Chapter 1743: Keeping and Destroying Records](#)

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