

Guidelines for ACUC Oversight of Animal Activities in Shared and Central Facilities

Oversight and monitoring of ongoing animal activities to ensure compliance with all regulations, policies and procedures is a priority for all NIH Animal Care and Use Committees (ACUC). Of utmost importance in this monitoring process is appropriate and timely action to address issues that potentially or actually impact the health or well-being of animals.

Because management practices supporting animals in shared or central facilities are under the purview of a lead Institute/Center (IC) and its ACUC, systems to address program monitoring must be established between the lead and user ICs and their ACUCs.

This guideline outlines the processes for the monitoring of animal activities in shared and central facilities. The final responsibility for the research use of each animal is with the Principal Investigator (PI) and their IC ACUC.

Although the principal responsibility for monitoring animal activities in shared or central facilities lies with the lead IC, user ACUCs are required to monitor the activities of their IC's investigators within shared or central facilities. That function is typically delegated to the Animal Program Director (APD) of each IC. The APD, as an agent of their ACUC, takes an active role in monitoring to ensure that the animals' well-being is being provided for, and that actions taken by the PIs and associated IC investigative and technical staff are in compliance with procedures described in Animal Study Proposals (ASP)s associated with their studies. User IC APDs may further delegate that monitoring function to members of their staff. Monitoring will be performed through:

- physical visits,
- professional interactions, and/or
- review of reports and records

In addition, two members of the user ACUC shall perform semiannual on-site assessments of their animals and associated animal activities in shared or central facilities. These visits are NOT intended to be equivalent to the in-depth semiannual facility inspections to be performed by the IC managing the facility. The User IC visits should be limited to:

- assessment of IC animals
- facility operations that directly affect those animals and
- procedure spaces used by IC Investigators

Such assessment visits will be coordinated with the facility management of the shared or central facility.

Minor operational issues that arise may be handled informally by the user IC's veterinary or management staff. Observations affecting the IC's animals should be shared with facility management and the lead IC ACUC. In the event corrective action(s) taken by the Shared or Central facility management are deemed incomplete or inadequate, the User IC ACUC and the Lead IC ACUC shall then meet and attempt resolution of the remaining disagreement(s). Only observations for which agreement could not be reached should be included in the IC's semiannual report.

Issues considered to be “significant deficiencies”, i.e. that potentially or actually impact the health or well-being of animals, must be promptly reported to the Director, Office of Animal Care & Use to assist in determining if the issue will be classified as a significant deficiency and if the issue will need to be reported to the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW).

OLAW reportable events will be processed as outline in PM 3040-2 paragraphs F.13.b.6.-8. “ACUC Responsibilities.”

When an investigation results from actions/inactions by the facility staff or as a result of a facility related event, the lead IC ACUC, ORS ACUC, or ORF will assume primary responsibility for the investigation and resolution of the issue.

When an investigation results from actions/inactions by an investigator or their staff, the PI’s IC ACUC will assume primary responsibility for the investigation and resolution of the issue.

The investigating ACUC will keep the other impacted ACUCs informed of the outcome of the investigation via direct communications and/or sharing copies of the draft and final summary memos.

In addition to PM 3040-2, ACUCs are encouraged to use the “[Checklist for ACUC Incident Investigation](#)” as a resource in conducting and reporting the investigation.

References:

NIH Policy Manual 3040-2: [Animal Care and Use in the Intramural Program](#)
[PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#), 2015

Approved ARAC – 11/12/1997

Reapproved – 3/10/2004

Revised – 11/10/1998, 9/12/2001, 11/21/2002, 6/14/06, 02/13/08, 12/08/10, 12/11/2013, 1/25/2017