Animal Care and Use: 

Roles and Responsibilities

The Texas A&M University Animal Welfare Assurance Program developed from the University’s commitment to address and comply with federal, local, and state requirements regarding the use of animals in teaching and research.

Texas A&M University, the Institution

Texas A&M has instituted and maintains the Animal Welfare Assurance Program for all faculty, staff, and students at Texas A&M and affiliated institutions, including the Texas A&M Health Science Center in College Station and certain agencies of the state of Texas (Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, and Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory). The program is designed to achieve and maintain regulatory compliance as well as provide a way for researchers to be informed about the requirements for the care and use of animals at Texas A&M. The University specifically establishes and implements policies that provide for the welfare of animals used in research and teaching and that ensure compliance. The University also ensures proper training for the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) chair and its members and principal investigators (PIs), who use animals in their research or teaching.

Institutional Official (IO)

The president of Texas A&M has appointed the vice president for research (VPR) as the Institutional Official (IO) responsible for the Animal Welfare Assurance Program at Texas A&M in College Station. As the IO, the VPR is authorized legally to commit on behalf of the institution that it will meet the requirements of applicable animal welfare laws, regulations, and policies. The IO appoints the members and the chair of the IACUC. Administratively, the IACUC reports to the IO. The chair of the IACUC also reports directly to the IO. The final authority for decisions pertaining to conduct of research and research compliance is the IO.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

The IACUC, qualified through the experience and expertise of its members, is responsible for the oversight of all animal use activities including the review of animal use protocols and Texas A&M’s animal care and use program. The IACUC also monitors the institution’s animal facilities to ensure compliance with standards and regulatory requirements.

http://rcb.tamu.edu
**Chair of the IACUC**

The chair of the IACUC presides at all meetings of the IACUC and may assign such additional duties to other members of the committee as deemed necessary for the conduct of the work of the IACUC. The chair of the IACUC reports to the IO. The chair also ensures that members of the committee are appropriately trained.

**Attending Veterinarian**

Federal regulations from the PHS Policy IV.A. and USDA 9 CFR, 2.31 require the appointment of a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine to serve on the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee with the authority and responsibility for activities involving animals at the institution. The term Attending Veterinarian is similarly defined in the Animal Welfare Act and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching* as a graduate veterinarian who has received training or experience in the care of the species being attended and who has direct or delegated authority for activities involving animals. The facility/institution shall make certain that the Attending Veterinarian has appropriate authority to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary care. The Attending Veterinarian shall be a voting member of the IACUC.

**Animal Welfare Assurance Program**

The Animal Welfare Assurance Program provides staff support to the IACUC. In addition, this office helps ensure animal welfare and compliance by coordinating the animal facility inspections and semi-annual program reviews as required by federal regulations. The program also assists with other monitoring activities, training, and assisting PIs and IACUC members in the review and approval process.

**Department Heads and Deans**

Every animal use protocol includes a signature of the PI’s supervisor as a part of the process. This signature acknowledges that the supervisor is aware of the protocol and approves of all the information as presented. In addition, supervisors are responsible for ensuring that research involving the use of animals is appropriately reviewed and approved by the IACUC prior to the initiation of any work. The supervisors are also responsible for ensuring the facilities and infrastructure are adequate for the proposed work.

**Principal Investigators (PIs)**

The PI is the one individual researcher who is designated by the institution to direct a project or program and who is responsible to the institution for the scientific and technical direction of that project or program. It is the responsibility of the PI to carry out their research in compliance with all federal, state, and university requirements with approval from the IACUC. Principal investigators must be trained and knowledgeable in appropriate laboratory techniques, safety procedures, and hazards associated with handling animals and are responsible for the conduct of work with any animals. The PI is responsible for the proper training of laboratory staff and for enforcement of IACUC rulings pertaining to lab specific research. The PI is also responsible for lab manuals, SOPs, licenses, and permits for transport and use of animals.