

University of Louisville
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
Policies and Procedures

Field Investigations

Policy: An IACUC *Proposal* must be completed and approved prior to commencing *any* form of field investigation utilizing vertebrate animals. A *Field Investigation* is defined as a study conducted on wild (non-domesticated) vertebrate animals in their natural habitat or in confinement that may or may not involve an invasive procedure, harm, or materially alter or influence the behavior or activities of an animal under study. Investigators should not only complete the section of the IACUC *Proposal* that deals specifically with field investigations but also other general sections of the IACUC as applicable. In addition to specific target species and information concerning proposed procedures and activities, the IACUC *Proposal* must also demonstrate knowledge of relevant zoonotic diseases, associated safety issues, and any laws or regulations that apply.

Rationale: To comply with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), PHS *Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, all studies that involve vertebrate animals require IACUC oversight. This oversight extends to studies conducted on wild (non-domesticated) animals in their natural habitat or in confinement, and applies the basic principles of humane care as outlined for studies conducted in the laboratory. In addition, the *Guide* charges the institution's health and safety officials to review occupational health and safety issues associated with proposed studies and supply the IACUC with assurances that the field investigation does not compromise the safety of either animals or persons in the field. The IACUC *Proposal* can also serve as an evaluation of the scientific merit of the proposed study which may be required for various permits needed to perform field studies.

Both writing and reviewing a *Proposal* utilizing non-domesticated species provides a unique challenge to both investigators and IACUC members due to the large number of unique species that could be the subject of a field investigation, limited information on techniques and medications for many species, uncertainty of the effects of experimentation on wildlife, the limitations presented by a field setting that may dictate different standards than those accustomed in a controlled lab setting, and occupational hazards. This policy and its associated information sheet (*see: IACUC Information Sheet "Field Investigations"*) serve as a guide to researchers and IACUC members in the drafting and reviewing of *Proposals* involving field investigations on non-domesticated vertebrate animals.

Procedures, Guidelines, and Exceptions:

1. Investigators conducting any form of field investigation must submit an IACUC *Proposal* for review and approval prior to initiating the study. The UofL IACUC requires that a *Proposal* be submitted for any and all types of field investigations, even those that are only observational in nature.
2. The PI must report to the IACUC any unexpected animal injuries or deaths due to activities associated with the research project as an adverse event as per IACUC policy "*Unexpected Findings and Adverse Events*".

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3. Principal Investigators are strongly encouraged to consult with a qualified wildlife biologist prior to the submission of a *Proposal* and should reference such consultations within the *Proposal*. Investigators should also consult the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* and relevant professional societies and available guidelines (*see*: IACUC Information Sheet “Field Studies”).
4. Principal Investigators are responsible for complying with all local, state, federal and international laws and regulations. It is the responsibility of the PI to obtain all necessary permits *prior* to the start of research and to include relevant permit information within the IACUC *Proposal*. Copies of permits must be made available upon request of the IACUC. All pertinent permit details (federal, state and site specific) should be included in the IACUC *Proposal*.
5. All personnel, including students or volunteers who will participate in field research, must be listed on the *Proposal* form. Project participants, personnel training, protective equipment, and associated safety issues or risks (e.g., zoonotic disease contraction, injury, etc.) are subject to Occupational Health and Safety Program review and approval.
6. Investigators must document the number of animals used and report animal usage to the IACUC Office annually (note: this applies to non-observation field studies only).
7. Method(s) of euthanasia or release must be described in the IACUC *Proposal*. Methods of euthanasia must comply with IACUC Policy (*see*: “Euthanasia of Research Animals”) and the AVMA *Guidelines for Euthanasia*. Information should also include the method of euthanasia that will be used for target and non-target species as part of planned experiment or due to unexpected injury or outcome, even if not anticipated (E.g., broken wings, hyperthermia, and seizure).
8. Animals held or housed must be monitored *at least daily* for applicable factors such as appearance, activity level, general behavior, appetite, rate of growth, change in body weight/body condition, breeding success, etc. Documentation of observations and housing parameters must be maintained for a period of three years and available for IACUC inspection at all times. The duration and location that animals will be held in captivity must be included in the IACUC *Proposal* for review and approval.

References:

1. *Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations, as amended. Title 9 CFR Subchapter A - Animal Welfare, Parts 1, 2, and 3.* USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Current Edition.
2. *AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition.* (<https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/2020-Euthanasia-Final-1-17-20.pdf>)
3. National Research Council, *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th Ed., National Academy Press, Revised 2011.
4. *Field Studies and the IACUC: Protocol Review, Oversight, and Occupational Health and Safety Considerations.* K. Laber, B. Kennedy, L. Young. Lab Animal Volume 36 No. 1 January 2007.
5. National Institutes of Health. 2002. Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, Bethesda
6. Interagency Research Animal Committee (IRAC). 1985. *U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training.*