The Animal Care Committee - Terms of Reference

Preamble

The Animal Care Committee (ACC) derives its authority from Trent University as well as from federal and provincial legislation, notably The Animals for Research Act (Ontario). As a result, in matters concerning animal regulations, the ACC is answerable to government officials as well as to the University. As most of the Committee’s activities have some bearing on animal care, it is often not possible (nor desirable) to determine where statutory authority and responsibility ends and University jurisdiction begins. Members of the ACC should bear this in mind when reading these Terms of Reference and Guidelines.

The ACC is responsible to the Vice-President (Academic) and to the President. The Animal Care Supervisor reports to the Associate Dean (Science) on matters related to their employment, and will work with the Chair of the ACC and Associate Dean (Science) on matters relating to Animal Care Facility (ACF) management and to implementation of animal care policy. He/she will have access to secretarial assistance from the Associate Dean’s office.

A. Membership

All members of the ACC have voting privileges unless otherwise indicated. Membership should include:

1. One faculty member from Biology, preferably someone experienced in animal care and research;
2. One faculty member from ERS, preferably someone experienced in animal care and research;
3. One faculty member from Psychology, preferably someone experienced in animal care and research;
4. One other faculty representative who is a non-animal user;
5. Two representatives of OPSEU local 365, preferably with a demonstrated interest and experience in animal care;
6. One graduate student member, preferably from the Sciences;
7. One undergraduate student member, preferably from the Sciences;
8. One veterinarian, preferably experienced in research-animal care;
9. The Animal Care Supervisor (ex officio);
10. The Associate Dean of Science (ex officio) or designate;
11. Science Facilities Manager (ex officio);
12. One person representing community interests.

- The ACC Chair should be a non-animal user member of faculty but if circumstances call for it, may be an animal user member of faculty. (See section E4 for procedures to follow when a Chair, who is an animal user, has a protocol under consideration.)
- The committee may co-opt other (non-voting) persons as needed. This should be done in consultation with the Vice President (Academic) or Associate Dean (Science).
- Quorum shall be a simple majority of serving members (including the Chair) and will ideally include the Community Representative and the Veterinarian.
- Where possible, no protocol application will be approved without the express consent of the Veterinarian and Community Member.
- For appointed university members, terms of service should be at least two years with no appointment being longer than four years. Consecutive appointments should not total to more than eight years.

B. Authorities

The ACC has the authority:

1. To stop any objectionable procedure if it considers that unnecessary pain or distress is being experienced by the animal.
2. To immediately terminate any use of animals which deviates from the approved protocol, any unapproved procedure, or any procedure causing unforeseen pain or distress to animals.
3. To order the humane killing of an animal if pain or distress caused to the animal is not part of the approved protocol and cannot be alleviated.
4. To confiscate animals that are not being used for purposes specified in approved protocols or which have not been brought formally (through the protocol approval process) to the attention of the ACC.

5. To request that the Veterinarian, Animal Care Supervisor or other member of the ACC, on deciding that prompt action is necessary to change the condition or size of the animal population, informs the Associate Dean or the Chair of the ACC as soon as is feasible.

C. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Animal Care Committee through its protocol approval policy to:

1. Ensure that all its members receive a copy of every animal use protocol submitted for approval.
2. Ensure that no research, testing project, teaching program, field study or educational display involving live vertebrates be commenced without prior approval of the ACC. The ACC should communicate this responsibility to the Research Policy Committee and the University Undergraduate Studies Committee annually.
3. As part of the protocol submission process, require the submission, of a written lay summary of research involving animals. This applies to research funded internally and externally.
4. Review and assess all animal use protocols, with particular attention to the CCAC’s Guide to the Care and Use of Experimental Animals and Ethics of Animal Experimentation and, where necessary, require further supportive information from the investigator or meet with the investigator to assure that all members of the Committee understand the procedures to be used on the animal. The ACC must also assure that all procedures comply with CCAC guidelines, and if at variance with those guidelines, require justification for the variance on scientific grounds.
5. Assure that all animal users have the opportunity to become familiar with CCAC’s Ethics statement, federal, provincial or municipal statutes that may apply, and institutional requirements for animal use.
6. Ensure appropriate care of animals in all stages of life and provide veterinary assistance (in some cases for a fee) in case of sickness, injury and elective procedures.
7. Undertake site visits as a Committee of all animal care facilities and experimental laboratories from time to time, but at least once a year, followed up by a written report.
8. The ACC shall establish procedures to ensure that:
   - unnecessary pain or distress to animals in its care is avoided;
   - anaesthesia and analgesia are properly and effectively used where indicated;
   - painful studies requiring exemption from the use of either anaesthetics or analgesia are subject to particular scrutiny, not only prior to approval, but throughout;
   - post-operative care commensurate with current veterinary concepts is provided;
9. The ACC shall establish policies which will provide for a program of animal care that will meet the needs of the University and that will include:
   - the requirement that all animal care and animal experimentation are conducted within the guidelines set by the CCAC and applicable federal, provincial and institutional regulations;
   - the training and qualification of animal users and animal care personnel;
   - establishment of standards of animal husbandry, animal care and testing facilities and equipment;
   - all activities and procedures that involve live vertebrate animals;
   - procedures for euthanasia.
10. The ACC will establish a process that provides an applicant the ability to appeal if their protocol is rejected (see section F). An appeal may involve an external review process.
11. Protocols must either arise from research that has been successfully externally peer reviewed for its scientific merit through the TriCouncil process or by similar agencies (NSF, NIH, etc.) that include peer review in their approval process or they must be accompanied by the names of at least two individuals who have no vested interest in the research and are qualified to review the work scientifically. Reviews must address the competence of the researcher, the appropriateness of the proposed methods and the scientific merit of the research.
12. The ACC will promote the use of currently acceptable standards of care and best practices by ensuring that researchers and students have access to such information.

D. Meetings

The Animal Care Committee should meet at least six times a year and otherwise as often as necessary to fulfill its Terms of Reference and be satisfied that all animal use within its jurisdiction is in compliance with institutional, municipal, federal and provincial regulations, and the CCAC Guidelines. Minutes of meetings should be taken. A verbal report by the Animal Care Supervisor and the Veterinarian on the state of operations in the ACF should be
an agenda item for each meeting.

E. Protocol Review Process

The ACC will accept applications for Animal Use Protocols from the following personnel:

1. Principal investigators who are employed by the University in a teaching or research capacity or who have Emeritus or Adjunct status in a Trent academic program and who are qualified to use animals in research and/or teaching.
2. Research Assistants, University Support Staff or Teaching Assistants/Demonstrators who have been designated by Principal Investigators, Course Co-ordinators or Departmental Chairs and who have been adequately trained in the use of animals for research and/or teaching.
3. Graduate and undergraduate students who must submit applications for animal use protocols, renewals or amendments to their supervisor of studies who will then submit them to the ACC. Graduate and undergraduate students named on protocol applications must be adequately trained in the use of animals for research.

Each application for an Animal Use Protocol will normally be reviewed in the following manner:

1. A completed animal use protocol application, renewal or amendment shall be submitted by the principal investigator, or authorized designate, to the secretary of the Associate Dean (Science).
2. Upon receipt, the secretary will forward a copy of the protocol application to each member of the ACC or otherwise ensure that ACC members are aware of the application and have access to it.
3. Each member of the ACC will review the application.
4. At the next meeting of the ACC, each application will be reviewed and discussed by the committee. Any member of the ACC may request that any visitor or ACC member who may be involved in the research protocol being assessed, leave the room for part or all of this discussion. (If the applicant is the ACC Chair, another faculty member of the committee will be asked to take the Chair temporarily.) Decisions will normally be by consensus.
5. An application will have one of four possible outcomes:
   1. Approved – work may start as of the ACC approved start date on the application. No changes are necessary.
   2. Conditional Approval – Certain information is missing in the application or a question(s) has been raised where a satisfactory answer is required prior to work commencing. To receive full approval, the applicant must supply the requested information to the Chair (or designate) who, if satisfied, is authorized by the Committee to issue full approval. When the ACC issues a conditional approval, it must supply the Chair of the committee with acceptable responses to assist the Chair in determining whether or not concerns have been addressed adequately.
   3. Denied – The work as outlined in the application may not proceed because it does not meet applicable best practices or ethical standards. The ACC will provide the reasons for issuing a denial.
   4. Decision deferred – This may apply to a protocol that is acceptable in principle but that requires clarifications or additional information beyond the scope that the Chair could approve (as in the conditional approval category). Protocols for which the decision has been deferred must come back to the Committee or the Sub-committee for approval.

As soon as reasonably possible, the Chair, on behalf of the ACC, will notify (with copies to the Animal Care Supervisor) the principal investigator/designate, or in the case of a student submission, the supervisor of studies, of the decision and the reasons for rejection or conditional or deferral, if applicable. The Animal Care Supervisor will keep copies of all approved protocols and correspondence pertaining to them on file.

Under circumstances or at times when the Committee cannot or does not meet (lack of quorum, summer months), or urgent attention is required, protocol applications will be reviewed in the following manner:

1. A completed animal use protocol application, renewal or amendment shall be submitted by the principal investigator or their authorized designate to the Secretary of the Associate Dean (Science) (forms are available through the Animal Care Web Page).
2. Upon receipt of the protocol, the Secretary will forward a copy of each protocol, or a notification of its availability, to each member of the ACC Subcommittee which consists of the ACC Chair, Veterinarian,
Community Member, and Animal Care Supervisor. If the ACC Chair is not a scientist, the input of a scientist member of the committee may also be sought.

All annually repeating animal work will require a full protocol at least every three years.

F. Appeals

Appeals of an unfavorable decision may be made through the following procedure:

1. The principal investigator or supervisor of studies may request to attend a meeting of the ACC to discuss the ruling. Discussion may result in clarifications acceptable to the ACC in which case a change in the status of the protocol may result.
2. If the result of the above meeting is not acceptable to the principal investigator or supervisor of studies, it may be appealed to the Vice President (Academic). The Vice President will convene a small committee consisting, if possible, of a former Chair of the ACC, a former faculty member of the ACC and him or herself, to review the decision. This committee will meet with both the principal investigator and the ACC to discuss the issue. This committee may or may not request additional information from external sources to assist in its deliberations.
3. The decision of the appeal committee is final.

G. General

1. The Animal Care Committee should regularly review:
   - its Terms of Reference;
   - the concerns of animal welfare organizations, particularly within the Peterborough area;
   - the security of the animals and research facilities;
   - standard operating procedures;
   - policies and procedures for monitoring animal care and experimental procedures within the university.
2. The ACC should maintain liaison with the CCAC Secretariat and with the provincial inspector.
3. The ACC should develop and maintain liaison with bona fide animal welfare organizations, particularly those recognized by and affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS), and try to foster an “open door” policy with such groups.
4. The ACC should sponsor from time to time seminars or workshops on research animal science and the ethics of animal experimentation.
5. The ACC should be aware that the general public has a legitimate interest in animal care at Trent, and should make every effort to allay public concerns regarding animal experimentation.
6. The ACC must develop a crisis management plan for the animal facilities and for the animal care and use program.
7. The ACC submits Animal Use Data Forms for all protocols annually and as part of the pre-assessment document.

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