

INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC)

POLICY ON HOUSING AND USE OF VERTEBRATE RESEARCH ANIMALS OUTSIDE OF MGH FACILITIES

OVERVIEW

Animals housed and used in IACUC-approved facilities at MGH are covered by MGH IACUC protocols. Circumstances may require that animals be housed or used at locations not part of the MGH animal care and use program (“off-site locations”). These include field studies, additional housing needs for the program, the conduct of research by or under the direction of MGH personnel in connection with his/her/their MGH responsibilities, and/or when MGH is identified in research funding applications. This policy outlines the institutional responsibility and requirements for the care and oversight of MGH animals housed or used at these off-site locations.

DEFINITIONS

Off-site location: any location not owned, operated, or leased by MGH where animals are housed or used for the purpose of research, testing, or teaching.

Off-site animal activity: any housing or use of animals for the purposes of research, testing, teaching, or related purposes that is conducted in whole or in part in the field or at a non-MGH institution, company, contracting laboratory, contract research organization, or similar facility.

GENERAL POLICY

Field studies.

An MGH IACUC protocol should be submitted for any study conducted by MGH personnel on free-living wild animals regardless of where it will be performed. that involves procedures that may harm or materially alter the behavior of the animals under study (*i.e.*, trapping/capture, physical/chemical restraint, and/or invasive procedures causing stress, including removal from nest and habitat for short durations). The MGH IACUC reserves the right to rely on another IACUC if appropriate and when an MOU is in place that describes the terms of the reliance agreement. The MGH IACUC may invite local experts to participate in the review as a consultant and will work with the principal investigator to determine the best mechanism to use for the conduct of semiannual, or other, inspections. This may include questionnaires, videos or photographs, local experts, or in-person inspections. For regulated species, all inspections will

be completed by two members of the IACUC. The principal investigator is required to be aware of, and obtain, all permits and licenses required at the Federal, State and local level prior to the conduct of the research, and must meet the requirements of all regulations governing the conduct of field research (see references). The investigator must describe which permits and licenses are required in the IACUC protocol and must be able to provide a copy of these permits and licenses to the IACUC during inspection. Other considerations include appropriate euthanasia methods, occupational health concerns, and the safety of research personnel and other animals. Shipping and receiving of animals or specimens must be conducted in accordance with federal safety and importation guidelines and regulations.

Off-site housing and use facilities.

At times, the MGH Animal Care and Use Program (ACUP) may use off-site facilities for quarantine, holding, research, or other purposes. Animals may be housed or used off-site entirely for, or at times throughout, a research project. An animal maintenance agreement and assurances addendum will typically be put into effect for these facilities. Any investigator requesting or requested to use these off-site facilities may do so only with the approval of the MGH IACUC. The MGH IACUC, together with the Attending Veterinarian, determines which off-site facilities may be approved as an MGH ACUP off-site facility. Investigators, conducting research in connection with his/her/their MGH responsibilities, may not utilize these off-site facilities for purposes other than those outlined in the agreement without prior approval of the MGH IACUC.

MGH Investigators may anticipate collaborative research in research grants, proposals and as part of their research projects. This may include situations where all the live animal work is conducted at MGH, all the live animal work is conducted at a collaborator's facility, or live animal work is conducted at both MGH and the collaborator's facility. In general, the institution where the animals are housed will be responsible for animal welfare and full regulatory compliance, unless otherwise agreed to by MGH and the collaborating institution(s). The housing institution's IACUC will have oversight of the animal research protocol and the conduct of the research, as well as have the responsibility to meet all applicable Federal, State, and other regulations and standards; veterinary care of the animals will also be the responsibility of the institution where the animals are housed. For collaborations where work will be conducted in part at MGH, and at part at a collaborating research facility, the MGH IACUC protocol will detail the work conducted at MGH and reference the transfer of animals to/from the collaborating research facility and generally describe the work conducted at the collaborating research facility and how it relates to the animal work conducted at MGH. A copy of the approved protocol from the collaborating site will be requested as part of the MGH IACUC review. The details of these collaborations will be captured in a grant subcontract, animal use agreement, memorandum of understanding or similar document, in most instances. When possible, investigators should consult with the MGH IACUC before entering into an agreement with off-site research facilities.

In situations where animals are housed or used at off-site facilities, although the MGH IACUC will rely on the collaborating institution for oversight and care of the animals, the MGH IACUC will ensure that the collaborating institutions meet the federal and state laws and regulations and current accreditation standards, when applicable, regardless of the animals' location. MGH's responsibilities are met by the following means, unless otherwise approved:

- Any institution that provides housing or research resources for MGH animals must be licensed by the USDA if regulated species are involved. In addition, the institution must have an approved Letter of Assurance from the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare. If the site does not have an assurance with OLAW, a special exception must be granted by the Institutional Official, before the MGH IACUC will permit housing or use at that facility. Accreditation by the Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC) is preferred.
- Before the MGH IACUC will rely on a collaborating site for research oversight and regulatory compliance, MGH reserves the right to require that the MGH Center for Comparative Medicine (CCM) conduct a site visit on behalf of the IACUC in advance of any MGH animals arriving at an off-site institution, or at any time during the research collaboration. In lieu of a site visit, the MGH IACUC may request the collaborating site complete an animal welfare questionnaire as part of MGH's due diligence to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare, particularly for MGH-funded research. In general, the MGH IACUC will rely on the semiannual facility inspection and program review of the collaborating institution, but may conduct site visits as part of the MGH semiannual facility inspection cycle.

The MGH IACUC may, at any time temporarily or permanently suspend their reliance on another institution's animal care and use program if regulatory violations are discovered or if animal welfare is determined to be unreasonably compromised. The MGH Institutional Official will be notified of any suspensions. If an MGH protocol is also suspended in concert with this action, regulatory authorities and AAALAC will be similarly notified, per standard MGH IACUC procedure and policy ([Policy on Reporting Animal Welfare Concerns](#)).

Animals housed at off-site collaborating institutions that need to be transferred to the MGH may require the same procedures as animals imported from non-approved sources, including quarantine and health assessment, before they can be placed in MGH animal housing areas. The Attending Veterinarian will determine the necessary procedures in such cases.

REFERENCES

Beaupre SJ, Jacobson ER, Lillywhite HB, and Zamudio, K. Guidelines for Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field and Laboratory Research (viewable at [Guidelines for Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field and Laboratory Research, 2nd edition](#)). American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists: Lawrence, KS, 2004.

Fair JM, Paul E, Jones J, Clark AB, Davie C. and Kaiser G. [Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research](#), The Ornithological Council: Washington DC, 2010.

National Research Council of the National Academies. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th edition](#). National Academies Press: Washington, D.C., 2011.

Nickum, JG, Bart HL, Bowser PR, Greer IE, Hubbs C, Jenkins JA, MacMillan JRm Rachlin JW, Rose JD, Sorensen PW, and Tomasso JR. [Guidelines for the Use of Fishes in Research](#). American Fisheries Society: Bethesda, MD, 2004

Sikes RS, Gannon WL, and the Animal Care and Use Committee of the American Society of Mammalogists. [Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists for the Use of Wild Mammals in Research](#). *Journal of Mammology*. 2011, 92(1):235-253.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. [Animal Welfare Act and Regulations](#) (Animal Care Blue Book). Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 9, Chapter 1, Subchapter A, Parts 1-4. 2020.

v1.1, 16 February 2005

v1.2, 20 September 2017

v2.1, 16 June 2021