



United States
Forest Service

Research and
Development

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Date: April 17, 2019

To: Carl Lucero, Director of Landscape Restoration and Ecosystem Services Research,
Institutional Officer of the USDA Forest Service Research and Development Institutional
Animal Care and Use Committee

From: USDA Forest Service Research and Development Institutional Animal Care and Use
Committee

Subject: Spring 2019 Semi-Annual Report to the Institutional Official

The USDA Forest Service Research and Development Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (USFS R&D IACUC) was established in October 2015 to oversee the care and use of all vertebrate animals in research related activities within the USFS R&D to ensure legal compliance with the USDA Animal Welfare Act (AWA). This Spring 2019 semi-annual report is a summary of ongoing IACUC operations, outlines any deficiencies, and provides recommendations for improvements.

Since its implementation four years ago, the IACUC has increased its workload from an initial oversight of 15 new approved research proposals per year to managing 60 approved and ongoing research protocols per year as of April 2019. Additional new proposals are added each month. IACUC operations continue to build our services to meet the needs of our research scientists, along with a concurrent increase in operational workload.

This report summarizes the IACUC's oversight of USFS R&D animal care and use activities, as required by the AWA regulations, as applicable. This report also details the Forest Service's compliance with the AWA and identifies deficiencies and potential deficiencies in compliance with the AWA. Submission of semi-annual reports to the Institutional Official (IO) is a condition of the institution's official registration as a federal research facility by USDA Animal Care. The following issues were discussed during this program review; the IACUC is working to address these issues, and recognizes that some may require action from Forest Service executives.

1. IACUC Membership and Functions

- The IACUC is duly constituted and consists of an IACUC chair, an Attending Veterinarian, two non-affiliated community members, and primary and alternative members from each of the five Forest Service Research Stations. A liaison from the USFS Starkey Experimental Forest and Range IACUC is an 'at large' non-voting member.
- Committee membership will transition in May 2019. Four members with expiring terms have agreed to extend their terms for 1 more year, and one member has agreed to a three-year extension. One SRS representative who has served since 2015 has resigned and a new SRS representative has been appointed to fill that position. The extended service of committee members has made this latest transition seamless and the committee is functioning well.
- The new member is required to complete CITI Program on-line training prior to their start date in May 2019. An appointment letter was issued to the new member and a Certificate of Appreciation was sent to the retiring member in thanks for their service.
- The IACUC continues to see an increase in workload as the number of approved research proposals accumulates since formation in 2015. There are currently 60 ongoing research proposals that require IACUC oversight.



- The IACUC recognizes the AWA requirement to complete semi-annual inspections of “animal housing facilities” where animals are housed for more than 12 hours. Such animal housing at USFS research sites is rare, often temporary or seasonal, or in remote locations where it is logistically difficult for IACUC members to physically visit these sites. Therefore, the IACUC continues to meet this requirement through virtual inspections such as requiring investigators to send photo-documentation (photographs and videos) of the field research sites. Recent IACUC discussions have suggested using social media tools such as Skype and Facetime for real time interactive virtual inspections. The Committee needs to schedule time to further develop a ‘Virtual Facility/Animal Housing Inspection Protocol’. This task is pending.
- The IACUC Administrator (IA) position to support IACUC operations was filled in June 2018 and has markedly increased the IACUC efficiency. The key roles of the IA are to manage the IACUC SharePoint database of approved research proposals including tracking reviews and post approval monitoring to maintain AWA regulatory compliance and to address any protocol violations. The IA also coordinates the activities of the Committee by arranging meetings, preparing meeting minutes, and assisting with webinars and teleconferences; prepares IACUC semi-annual and annual reports for national review by the IO and USDA Animal Care; and develops/updates content for the IACUC internet / intranet web pages and IACUC SharePoint site. The IA participates in development of annual training in the principles of animal welfare for USFS scientists.
- The IACUC developed an online survey to receive feedback from the USFS research community on how the IACUC has been meeting their current and future needs for oversight and guidance on animal welfare issues. The survey was conducted in November-December 2018. The government shutdown delayed analysis of survey results until employees returned to work in February 2019. The survey summary is attached to this report. Key highlights include:
 - Many scientists have visited the IACUC Intranet and found sufficient resource materials on the IACUC proposal submission process
 - General agreement that IACUC members are a helpful resource for animal welfare, care and use information
 - Many respondents (not all) have attended the past IACUC webinars and suggested future topics relevant to fish & wildlife field research
 - Suggestions were made for improving and simplifying the IACUC template forms
 - Suggestions were made for tailoring the online animal welfare training to wildlife skills needed in field research. Comments included that the CITI Program training is focused on animal welfare laws/regulations and not relevant to fish/wildlife research.
 - Requests were made for a library of standard technical procedures for various taxa groups.

2. IACUC Records and Reporting Requirements

- PARTIALLY CORRECTED - Minor Deficiency: A standard naming convention was developed this year to resolve incongruent nomenclature on document files in the IACUC SharePoint site filing system. Still pending completion is better file organization to be consistent and easy to retrieve information. The IA also continues to update template forms and develop fillable “pdf” forms with electronic signatures to help reduce time associated with filling out and approving forms.
- DEFICIENCY: A semi-annual e-mail notice to R&D scientists needs to be initiated as a reminder of the resources that have been made available to scientists when working with the IACUC.

- The IACUC completed the 2018 Annual Report to USDA Animal Care by the deadline in December 2018. All previous annual reports were submitted on time.

3. Attending Veterinarian

- The Forest Service Attending Veterinarian (AV) is based in the Washington Office with limited availability for field work associated with the USFS national research program. The AV provides general oversight for animal care and use, guidance on use of controlled substances/drugs for chemical immobilization, anesthesia, and euthanasia; and guidance on handling, surgery, and biological sample collections. The AV may delegate responsibility for direct “hands-on” veterinary care of animals used in R&D research stations to contracted local veterinarians. Such contracted veterinarians would report any animal care and use concerns to the AV.
- A “Verification and Veterinary Consultation” (VVC) protocol was developed by the IACUC to facilitate direct approval by the AV of certain minor amendments to IACUC approved research study proposals.

4. Personnel Qualifications and Training

- PARTIALLY CORRECTED - Minor Deficiency. Some IACUC members, the IA, and the IO must complete the initial required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program training modules or the 3-year refresher training. Reminders will be sent to those who need to complete their respective online trainings.
- The new web link on the IACUC Intranet (Resources section) was created by the SCAW webmaster to restore access to the 2017 SCAW “IACUC and Fish & Wildlife Research” conference recorded sessions sponsored by USFS R&D. A request was sent to SCAW regarding numbers of viewers of this recording.

5. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

- OHS training for USFS scientists appears to vary among the Research Stations and collaborating universities. The IACUC continues to express interest in emphasizing field biosafety training and how to complete a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) or Deliberative Risk Analysis (DRA) for fish and wildlife research as it relates to animal welfare concerns to minimize disease transmission between animal populations.
- The AV worked with the USFS OHS staff to update Chapter 50 on zoonotic diseases in the USFS Field Manual. The AV is a member of the USDA Joint Committee on Biorisk Management Program to represent the USFS.

6. Veterinary Medicine, Surgery, Pain & Distress, Euthanasia, Drug Control

- The IACUC commented that wildlife researchers could benefit from further training on proper euthanasia methods. The AV has offered to give a webinar to all R&D wildlife researchers on acceptable methods of euthanasia and how to make determinations about euthanasia. This webinar will be scheduled in the Fall 2019. The IACUC will also continue to search relevant training and reference resources for euthanasia, and post or provide links on the IACUC intranet.



- The AV continues to provide guidance to USFS researchers on the process to acquire federal and state DEA permits to use controlled substances. The IACUC and AV make every effort to assist researchers to meet the legal requirements of the DEA Controlled Substances Act.
- The IACUC and AV recognize the need for veterinary 'back-up' for the occasional lack of timely availability of the AV. Further discussions will follow to develop contingency plans as needed (Pending).

Action Items and Next Steps for the IACUC to correct deficiencies:

- Partial Correction of Minor Deficiencies:
 - IACUC filing system – better organization of document files
 - CITI Training—Ensure all IACUC members, the IA, and IO are current on their trainings.
- The IACUC will address comments received from the R&D scientist survey to include revisions to simplify template forms and distribute information about the IACUC Intranet.
- The IACUC will provide a training webinar in the Fall 2019 to address USFS scientist's needs in field research.
- Pending: NFS wildlife management actions are not currently covered by any IACUC, although several NFS scientists have inquired about IACUC review of their activities. The IACUC will continue to consider what, if any, oversight is necessary for NFS wildlife management actions such as fish & wildlife population surveillance and monitoring studies. A small IACUC working group will be created to further discuss this issue. There may be opportunity to continue to foster collaborations between NFS and R&D through IACUC, including:
 - Including an R&D collaborator with NFS field personnel when proposals are submitted for IACUC review
 - Adding an NFS representative to the IACUC committee
- Pending: An IACUC working group will be created to develop animal housing/ facility virtual inspection protocols for remote animal housing sites.
- There will be further conversation on how to address time-sensitive situations where Attending Veterinary reviews are needed, but the Attending Veterinarian is unavailable.

Respectfully submitted,

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USFS R&D IACUC Chair

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Attending Veterinarian

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Non-Affiliated Member

3 May 2019

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