A. Background

WSU’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is charged to verify that "Adequate Veterinary Care" will be provided for all research and teaching animals. The term "Adequate Veterinary Care" is defined in a series of laws, regulations, and policy statements issued by a variety of public and private agencies. Components of adequate veterinary care include programs of disease detection and surveillance, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and resolution. Programs of adequate veterinary care also involve consultation with animal users, training of research personnel, evaluation of animal vendors, overall assessment of adequacy of postoperative care, and provision of weekend and holiday care for the animals. Programs of veterinary care must be documentable to regulatory agencies and there are record-keeping requirements.

Each campus animal facility has a veterinarian or veterinary service that provides veterinary care for animals within that unit. For example, The Office of the Campus Veterinarian Staff provide clinical services for a majority of the facilities that house traditional laboratory animal species while Veterinary Clinical Sciences large animal veterinarians provide clinical services for the Animal Science Farm Animal Centers and the College of Veterinary Medicine large animal herds.

Many campus researchers and instructors are also veterinarians. In some cases, these veterinarians choose to deliver veterinary services, such as treatment of sick animals and administration of postoperative care, for their own experimental animals. These individuals are often highly qualified to administer such care and there is every reason to encourage their involvement.

This policy statement by the WSU IACUC is intended to allow veterinary faculty to directly deliver veterinary care for their own animals to the greatest extent possible consistent with the campus’ need to monitor and document such care. This policy applies to all locations where WSU owned animals are housed.

Additional information relating to adequate veterinary care may be found in The Animal Welfare Act, The Guide for The Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (2011) and the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine position statement on adequate veterinary care in laboratory animals.

B. Policy

Adequate veterinary care is an institutional responsibility. The Office of the Campus Veterinarian (the Attending Veterinarian of record) under the Federal Animal Welfare Act, has final responsibility to insure that campus programs of veterinary care are adequate.
Colleges, Departments and individual investigators have designated particular veterinarians and/or veterinary services (e.g., Veterinary Clinical Sciences large or small animal veterinarians) to have responsibility for veterinary care within their units. These veterinarians and services have statutory responsibilities under delegated authority from the Attending Veterinarian.

Veterinarian-researchers/instructors who wish to directly provide veterinary care for their own animals are free to do so, provided they work in close association with the Attending Veterinarian and the Veterinary Clinical Sciences Staff Veterinarians who provide routine veterinary care for the unit where the researcher/instructors animals are housed. This will normally include providing advice about the project, information as to what components of veterinary care the researcher/instructor wishes to provide, and providing medical records to the animal facility appropriate to the needs of the project.

The Attending Veterinarian retains the responsibility for the adequacy of veterinary care and retains oversight responsibility for animals within the research and teaching animal housing units so must be informed about all veterinary cases. Animal caretakers must continue to report sick calls to the designated veterinary service provider (e.g., to the veterinarian-researcher/instructor, Veterinary Clinical Sciences large or small animal staff veterinarians, or the Attending Veterinarian) but if the veterinary service provider is not the Attending Veterinarian then the Attending Veterinarian must also be informed. The Attending Veterinarian may be informed by email, phone call and by recording cases in the Office of the Campus Veterinarian Animal Health Database. Sufficient information must be given to assure that adequate veterinary care is being delivered.

Disagreements regarding the care being provided should be discussed between the veterinarian-scientist and the Attending Veterinarian. However, as stated in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, “In the case of a pressing health problem, if the responsible person (e.g., investigator) is not available or if the investigator and veterinary staff cannot reach consensus on treatment, the veterinarian must have the authority, delegated by senior administration and the IACUC, to treat the animal, remove it from the experiment, institute appropriate measures to relieve severe pain or distress, or perform euthanasia if necessary” (pg 114)

C. Resources


2. To review the policy statement by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine regarding adequate veterinary care, go to this web site: http://www.aclam.org/Content/files/files/Public/Active/position_adeqvetcare.pdf

Approved by WSU-IACUC on: January 28, 2015