

Frequently Asked Questions – IACUC

1. What is the IACUC?

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is a committee made up of scientists and community members who ensure that research involving animal subjects is well planned and ethical. The name of the IACUC at Lifespan is the Animal Welfare Committee (AWC).

2. What needs IACUC review?

All research that involves animal subjects must be reviewed by the IACUC.

Every new and competing continuation funding proposal that includes the use of animals must be submitted to the Animals Welfare Committee for review as a new application.

3. How do I submit an IACUC Application?

Instructions, forms and deadlines for IACUC submission are located on the IACUC webpage, <http://www.lifespan.org/research/>. Special Guidance for investigators regarding protocol development is also available on the webpage.

Briefly, the Animal Care and Use Protocol form (ACUP) is to be downloaded from the website. A separate research plan or grant application for external funding is also required. The complete application, along with the appropriate number of copies, is to be delivered to the Office of Research Administration in Aldrich 5. Deadlines for review are posted on the website.

4. What does “alternative to animal testing” mean?

Alternative methods fall into three broad categories. These are called the three R’s: **Replacement**, **Reduction**, and **Refinement**. The idea is to replace the use of animals when possible, reduce the number of animals used, and minimize any pain or distress suffered by the animals.

5. What kinds of alternatives are there?

Replacement is what most people think of when you say “alternatives to animal testing:” the animals are replaced either by methods that don’t involve animals at all (absolute replacement) or by those that use only the cells or tissues of animals (relative replacement). Many replacement alternatives involve those *in vitro* techniques, using cells or tissues in a test tube. Computer modeling also can replace certain kinds of animal use, particularly in education. And people can replace animals in some kinds of research.

Unfortunately, replacement isn’t always an option. Some important kinds of testing just can’t be done without animals, at least for now. But researchers can still reduce the number the number of animals used within a given experiment. With careful experimental design and sophisticated statistical techniques, investigators can get the most out of the data gathered from each animal so they need fewer animals altogether. *In vitro* methods and computer models also can help reduce animal use.

Scientists also may refine their methods to ease any pain or suffering and to make the animals more comfortable. These alternatives may come in a great variety of forms. Giving an animal proper medication for pain is one form. Refinement also includes such things as providing animals with bigger cages, offering them appropriate toys to play with, and letting them have companions of their own kind.

USDA regulations require that investigators search the scientific literature for alternatives, but if this isn't done until the IACUC approval stage, most researchers will have already determined what animals they are going to use and how.

Considering alternatives during the planning stage gives you enough time to incorporate methods that benefit the animals and the science. It also shows peer reviewers that you are thorough and reduces your chances of a bar to award because of animal welfare concerns.

Adapted from The Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing publication

6. *What is CAF Orientation?*

All personnel who work with animals, or who work in a lab where animal are used must receive orientation from the Central Animal Facility (CAF) Manager. Please call 444-5788 to schedule a training session.

7. *Now that my study has IACUC approval, what do I have to do?*

Projects that are funded by a grant or contract must also have received a financial activation notice from the Office of Grants and Contracts within the Office of Research Administration before the project can be initiated. Changes cannot be instituted in a protocol until they have been reviewed and approved by the IACUC. Projects are approved for a period of time up to one year from the initial IACUC review date. Investigators are required to provide a progress report requesting approval for continuation before IACUC approval expires. Also, a new “de novo” application is required every three years regardless of the funding cycle or funding sponsor type.

8. *What do I have to report to the IACUC?*

Investigators must promptly report any problems encountered with the protocol.

9. *How do I close my study when the research is complete?*

Progress report forms are sent to principal investigators approximately two months before expiration of IACUC approval. The progress report form should be completed as indicated for terminating studies. If a study is terminating well before the time when a progress report would be sent, a special progress report form can be generated. Please contact the Office of Research Administration to obtain a progress report form.