



# Animal Ethics Committee – Animal Carers and Facility Managers Responsibilities

## FACT SHEET

In accordance with the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013* (the Code), each person involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes must consider the governing principles when applying the Code. This includes people involved in the care of animals that are used for scientific purposes, including during their acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry.

This Fact Sheet outlines the responsibilities of Animal Carers and Facility Managers and any obligations they are required to fulfil pursuant to Section 2.5 of the Code.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
Animal Carer	Any person involved in the care of animals that are used for scientific purposes includes acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry.
Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)	A committee responsible for reviewing and approving animal research protocols, monitoring ongoing projects, and ensuring compliance with animal welfare legislation.
Animal Monitoring Officer	Appointed suitably qualified individual to monitor animal care and use, including projects and activities conducted at remote sites.
Animal Welfare	An animal's quality of life, which encompasses the diverse ways an animal may perceive and respond to their circumstances, ranging from a positive state of wellbeing to a negative state of distress.
Behavioural Needs	Actions motivated by internal stimuli required for an animal's wellbeing (for example nesting).

Chief Investigator	Investigator with ultimate responsibility for the project and welfare of every animal allocated to an approved project. They are the first point of contact for the AEC as the project's representative.
Competent	The consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required regarding the care and use of animals. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skill to new situations and environments.
Compliance	Acting in accordance with the appropriate legislation and AEC procedures, policies and approval conditions.
Current best practice	A practice, procedure, method or process that has proven to be most effective in supporting and safeguarding animal wellbeing.
Distress	An animal is in a negative mental state and has been unable to adapt to stressors to sustain a state of wellbeing.
Facility	Any place where animals are kept, held or housed, including yards, paddocks, tanks, ponds, buildings, cages, pens and containers.
Facility Manager	Person responsible for the overall management of a facility used for the breeding and holding of animals.
Inspections	Process where designated personnel or the AEC review animal holding areas, facilities or remote sites to ensure compliance with the Code and AEC approval conditions.
Institutions	Any organisation or agency involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. An institution must be licensed for the purposes of animal research under the <i>Animal Welfare Act 1993</i> .
Investigators	Any person who uses animals for scientific purposes.
Monitoring	Measures undertaken to assess, or to ensure the assessment of, the wellbeing of animals in accordance with the Code.
Physiological Needs	The most basic needs required for animal survival (includes food, water, air, sleep, shelter, temperature).
Procedure	A technique employed when caring for or using animals for scientific purposes.
Project	An activity or group of activities that form a discrete piece of work that aims to achieve a scientific purpose.
Routine Husbandry	Practices or procedures performed in relation to the care and management of animals with the primary purposes of maintaining their health and wellbeing.
The Code	<i>Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013</i>



# Responsibilities

The scope of responsibilities of people who provide care to animals is determined by their role at the different stages of animal use.

The wellbeing of animals which are to be supplied to an approved project (at which point an investigator is responsible), is the responsibility of the person who is engaged to provide care for the animals, otherwise known as an animal carer.

All investigators are responsible for the wellbeing of an animal throughout the period of use during an approved project, until such time that provisions are made for the animal at the conclusion of their use.

Chief Investigators must ensure an adequate number of competent individuals can provide care for the animals during the approval period.

If investigators are to act as an animal carer for the duration of an approved project, they must comply with the responsibilities of both an investigator and animal carer outlined in the Code.

A facility must identify a person who has ultimate responsibility for the care of the animals in the event more than one person is responsible for their wellbeing. However, identification of such an individual does not exempt individual responsibility of all those who provide care for the animals.

Any individual found to be non-compliant with the Code and/or AEC approval conditions in relation to their responsibilities as an animal carer will be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas)'s AEC Non-Compliance Policy and Procedure.

## Responsibilities of Animal Carers

### Requirements to support animal wellbeing

- ✓ Ensure the daily care and wellbeing of animals, including providing appropriate food, water, shelter, social interaction and environmental enrichment appropriate to the species and use.
- ✓ Ensure the integrity and cleanliness of the environment, including maintenance of hygienic, safe and species-appropriate environments.
- ✓ Promptly detect and respond to health and welfare issues, and report any concerns to the relevant investigators, veterinarians or NRE Tas AEC.
- ✓ Contribute to the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) through supporting efforts to refine are and procedures to minimise harm and improve outcomes.
- ✓ Be familiar with and follow approved protocols as outlined in AEC-approved applications or standard operating procedures, including those for handling, monitoring or treating animals.
- ✓ Monitor animals routinely and maintain daily monitoring and treatment records that capture health, behaviour and any interventions.
- ✓ Only undertake tasks for which they have received appropriate education and assessed as competency in.



## Requirements to avoid or minimise harm, including pain and distress to animals

- ✓ Animal carers who are investigators for the purposes of an approved project must be informed of the facilities monitoring and assessment procedures if involved in an approved project to ensure day-to-day monitoring requirements are met.
- ✓ Seek veterinary advice or expert assistance when animals show signs of pain, distress, illness or as otherwise required.
- ✓ If distress or pain is detected that is outside of the approved levels under AEC project conditions, the animal carer or investigator must report the incident as an unexpected adverse event in accordance with the NRE Tas AEC Unexpected Adverse Event Policy and Procedure.
- ✓ Communicate promptly and effectively with investigators and other personnel about animal welfare and any observed changes.
- ✓ In the event of emergency welfare intervention for an animal included in an approved project, the animal carer must take reasonable steps to first contact the responsible investigator.
- ✓ If unable to contact the responsible investigator, the animal carer must prioritise the welfare of the animal and if required undertake immediate intervention. If immediate intervention is necessary animal carers must advise the responsible investigator of the actions taken and reasons for intervention.
- ✓ If immediate intervention is due to an unexpected adverse event, the event must be reported in accordance with the NRE Tas Unexpected Adverse Event Policy and Procedure.

## Requirements to ensure provision of animals at conclusion of use

- ✓ At the conclusion of their use animal carers must take prompt action regarding provisions for animals in accordance with AEC approved conditions.
- ✓ If the humane killing of animals is necessary, it must be done in accordance with AEC approved conditions as stated on the approved application and reported to the AEC in the final report.
- ✓ The disposal of carcasses and tissues from animals humanely killed or those that have died must be sanitary and in an appropriate manner.
- ✓ Animal carers not involved in an approved project should, where possible, maintain tissue samples from animals for investigators and their work if they are responsible for the disposal of animal carcasses and tissues.

## Requirements to maintain records

- ✓ Accurate records that cover the care and monitoring of animals, health status and breeding must be maintained.
- ✓ Records must be detailed enough to allow the AEC to verify the wellbeing of animals that have been monitored, assess the cause(s) of and respond to any unexpected adverse events and address future prevent strategies.
- ✓ Records relating to animal health status and/or breeding performance must include:



- Source, care, supply, movement between locations and use of animals
  - Details of diseases in facility
  - Fertility, fecundity, morbidity, mortality rates
  - Health statistics, genetic constitution, physical environment of animals.
- ✓ Records must be made available to the institution (NRE Tas), AEC, authorised external reviewers and investigators.

## Responsibilities of Facility Managers

A facility manager is the person/s responsible for the overall management of animal facilities and are to ensure the ethical and appropriate care and use of animals for scientific and teaching purposes.

Facility managers must be competent, with appropriate animal care or veterinary qualifications and/or experience.

If facility managers are also the individual providing oversight of the program of veterinary care, inclusive of the care, husbandry and health of animals and biosecurity in a facility, they must be competent and hold appropriate veterinary qualifications.

With any required support from the Institution, staff and/or advice from veterinarians, the facility manager must:

### Requirements to ensure animal welfare, health and daily care

- ✓ Ensure facilities are suitable for animal use and support good welfare, meet species-specific needs and enable compliance with approved activities.
- ✓ Ensure the diagnosis and care of ill or injured animals and arrange timely veterinary services where required.
- ✓ Implement and enforce biosecurity and health protocols.
- ✓ Ensure daily monitoring by competent staff and actions are taken as needed.
- ✓ Oversee breeding performance, including the maintenance of health and breeding records.

### Requirements to ensure the training, supervision and competency of staff

- ✓ Ensure all animal care staff are trained, supervised and aware of their responsibilities.
- ✓ Support training and competency by ensuring staff receive appropriate training and are assessed as competent before undertaking animal-related tasks.
- ✓ Ensure staff are advised of any WHS risks associated with animal care.

### Requirements to ensure compliance, governance and risk management oversight

- ✓ Ensure compliance with the Code and AEC requirements by implementing systems that support AEC decisions, maintain standards and manage non-compliance.
- ✓ Ensure activities are conducted according to AEC approval and cease those activities if approval is withdrawn or suspended.



- ✓ Ensure permits, licences and approvals for holding and supply of animals are current.
- ✓ Provide resources and systems to support compliant care, including assisting in the development and maintenance of animal care quality systems.
- ✓ Provide an annual facility report to the AEC.

## Requirements to monitor, review and continuously improve facility performance

- ✓ Monitor facility performance by reviewing equipment, housing and procedures regularly and respond to any identified problems or risks.
- ✓ Support animal wellbeing and the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) by promoting an environment that encourages the 3Rs in animal use.

## Requirements to maintain communication and stakeholder engagement

- ✓ Liaise with investigators and AECs, including notifying about housing changes or unexpected adverse events.

## Summary

Role	Focus	Key Differences
Animal Carers	Daily animal welfare and care	Animal carers are operational – their responsibility lie in the hands-on care and observation of animals
Facility Managers	Facility-wide oversight and compliance	Facility managers are strategic and administrative – they ensure the systems, environment, staffing and resources support the ethical and compliant care of animals

## Supporting Documents:

- [Animal Welfare Act 1993](#)
- [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2013](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Terms of Reference](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Operating Procedures](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Annual Facility Report](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Annual Facility Report Fact Sheet](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Non-Compliance Policy and Procedure](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)
- [NRE Tas AEC Unexpected Adverse Events Policy and Procedure](#)



## Contact Information:

For further guidance or clarification, contact the NRE Tas AEC Executive Officer at [executiveofficer.aec@nre.tas.gov.au](mailto:executiveofficer.aec@nre.tas.gov.au).

