



POLICY: Pre-Research Laboratory Site Inspection

Objective:	To ensure live vertebrate animal research is performed in safe, clean, and approved laboratory environments
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I. Introduction

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is committed to a program of animal care which ensures that all animals involved in research and teaching are used in ways judged to be scientifically, technically, and humanely appropriate.

The University is further committed to assisting faculty and students in fulfilling their obligation to plan and conduct animal experiments in accord with the highest scientific, humane, and ethical principles, and in accord with the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and the Animal Welfare Act.

Although these regulations and policies do not specifically state that laboratory spaces must be inspected prior to initiation of work with vertebrate animals, it is the responsibility of the institution to, at all times, safeguard the health and welfare of research and teaching with live vertebrate animals.

Semi-annual inspections are mandated to occur every six (6) months at *“all of the institution's animal facilities (including satellite facilities) using the Guide as a basis for evaluation”* (i.e., in all spaces where live vertebrate animals are housed and used for research or teaching during the previous six (6) month cycle).

Additionally, the institution, and specifically the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), is required to:

- *“confirm that the research project will be conducted in accordance with the [Animal Welfare Act](#) insofar as it applies to the research project, and that the research project is consistent with the Guide unless acceptable justification for a departure is presented.”*
“This [PHS] Policy requires that Assured institutions base their programs of animal care and use on the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and that they comply with the applicable regulations (9 CFR, Subchapter A) issued by USDA under the Animal Welfare Act. The Guide may differ from USDA regulations in some respects. Compliance with applicable USDA regulations is an absolute requirement of this Policy.”
- review concerns involving the care and use of animals at the institution;
- review and approve, require modifications in (to secure approval), or withhold approval of those components of PHS-conducted or supported activities related to the care and use of animals as specified in IV.C. of this [PHS] Policy;
- review and approve, require modifications in (to secure approval), or withhold approval of proposed significant changes regarding the use of animals in ongoing activities; and

- be authorized to suspend an activity involving animals in accordance with the specifications set forth in IV.C.6. of this [PHS] Policy.

Research outside of the established main facility (the vivarium) and/or research moved from one laboratory space to another are considered a Significant Change to animal activities.

For these reasons, the IACUC considers it best practice to inspect laboratory spaces prior to initiation of live vertebrate animal research or teaching.

II. Policy

1. All new laboratory spaces where live vertebrate animals will be present for research or teaching will be inspected prior to initiation of work. This includes:
 - a. Laboratory spaces for new researchers
 - b. New laboratory spaces for existing researchers who have moved to a new room
 - c. Any change in location of research listed in an IACUC approved protocol. This requires both an amendment to the protocol and an inspection.
2. All spaces outside of the vivarium that will be used within the subsequent 6 months for vertebrate animal research or teaching will be inspected by a subset of voting members from the IACUC.
3. A mutually agreed upon time will be set for members to meet with the PI in the laboratory or room.

“There is no requirement for the investigator to be physically present during the [semiannual] facility inspections of the animal or satellite facilities where their research is being conducted. Although not required, it may be helpful to have an authorized animal user listed on the approved protocol or other key personnel who are knowledgeable about the animal activities being conducted available to answer questions.” [PHS FAQ E.5].

The UNC Charlotte IACUC considers it best practice to have the PI and/or staff present to answer any questions.
4. The laboratory will, at time of inspection, be fully equipped and functional for research/teaching purposes.
5. Inspection requirements will be the same as those mandated for subsequent semi-annual inspections.
6. Inspections may or may not be in conjunction with inspections by the Biosafety Officer and/or Environmental Health and Safety personnel.

References

1. Animal Welfare Act (9 CFR, Subchapter A)
2. Guidance on Significant Changes to Animal Activities NOT-OD-14-126
3. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. National Research Council (US) Committee for the Update of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals 8th edition. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2011.
4. PHS FAQ E.5. Program Review and Inspection of Facilities
5. Public Health Service Act (PHS Act) Section 495 (42 U.S.C. §289d)
6. The Health Research Extension Act of 1985, Public Law 99-158

Revision History

Approved August 26, 2024