

Animal Welfare Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy provides a framework to:

- a. ensure the ethical, humane and responsible treatment of animals in all aspects of teaching, learning and research at Victoria University (VU);
- b. ensure the ethical and responsible treatment of animal tissues in all aspects of teaching, learning and research at VU; and,
- c. ensure the University's compliance with all relevant statutes, codes and guidelines.

(2) The University takes its ethical obligations to animals seriously and commits to fulfilling these obligations with respect to all animals used by the University in all aspects of its operations, and in considering the appropriate uses that may be made of animal tissues.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to:

- a. VU staff and students, wherever located, and visitors (when onsite at VU or off-site working on VU AEC approved projects) who propose to undertake scientific, educational or artistic work using animals; and
- b. VU staff and students, wherever located, and visitors (when onsite at VU) who propose to undertake scientific, educational or artistic work using animal tissue, whether extracted from a living or dead animal.

(4) This Policy does not apply to:

- a. The care and management of privately owned pets that may come onto VU campuses from time to time as pets and not for any other purpose. For this area, please see the [Health and Safety - Animals on Campus Procedure](#) under the [Health and Safety Policy](#);
- b. The care and management of privately owned animals that may come onto VU campuses for display and exhibition purposes only;
- c. Compliance with the [Gene Technology Act 2000](#) regarding the approval and use of genetically modified animals; this is managed by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC);
- d. Compliance with the [Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 \(Vic\)](#) for the import of pest animals; this is managed by the IBC;
- e. Compliance with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) for the import of live animals; this is managed by the IBC; and,
- f. Preparation and consumption of food.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) Respect for animals underpins all decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals for research, teaching and artistic purposes at VU. This respect is demonstrated by the application of the following principles:

- a. using animals only when it is justified;
- b. supporting the wellbeing of the animals involved;
- c. avoiding or minimising harm, including pain and distress, to those animals;
- d. applying high standards of scientific integrity; and
- e. knowing and accepting one's responsibilities.

(6) VU will apply the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) at all stages of animal care. These principles prompt:

- a. the Replacement of animals with other methods where this is possible and suitable;
- b. the Reduction in the number of animals used to the minimum number required to achieve the research, teaching or artistic objective; and
- c. the Refinement of techniques used to minimise the adverse impact on animals.

(7) All people involved in the care and use of animals for research, teaching and artistic purposes at VU will be aware of, and comply with, the requirements of the Code, and other relevant legislation or regulations, at all times.

(8) The care and use of animals for research, teaching and artistic purposes at VU will be subject to ethical review via the Animal Ethics Committee. All activities using live animals or animals killed specifically for the purpose of the activity must be approved by the Committee prior to commencing and will be subject to monitoring throughout their duration.

(9) A judgment as to whether a proposed use of animals is ethically acceptable must be based on the provision of information that demonstrates the application of the principles a. to e., as outlined in clause 5 of this Policy and must balance whether the potential effects on the well-being of the animals involved is justified by the potential benefits.

(10) The obligation to respect animals, and the responsibilities associated with this obligation, apply throughout the animal's lifetime, including acquisition, transport, breeding, housing, husbandry, use of the animal in a project, and provisions for the animal at the conclusion of their use.

(11) VU will provide ongoing support for animals' welfare during their use at the University, which includes inspections of housing conditions, monitoring of the wellbeing and health of the animals, and the taking of appropriate action to reduce or end suffering where this occurs.

(12) VU will maintain a reporting system where animal welfare is regularly reported upon, including the reporting of adverse events affecting animals and an investigation of the reasons that these events have occurred.

(13) VU will require all people involved in the handling and care of animals, and the performing of procedures on animals, to be appropriately trained and competency assessed to perform these tasks proficiently and appropriately.

(14) The use of animal tissues (whether extracted from living or dead animals) will be conducted with regard to the appropriateness and necessity of the use, in line with the relevant principles outlined in this Policy (i.e., clause 5 a. to e.).

(15) Animal tissue use will be reported to the Animal Ethics Committee.

(16) VU will require all relevant permits and licenses to be obtained prior to animal use commencing.

Section 4 - Procedures

(17) [Animal Welfare Complaints Procedure](#)

(18) [Animal Welfare Non-Compliant Events Procedure](#)

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(19) HESF: 4.1 Research; 4.2 Research Training; 5.2 Academic and Research Integrity.

Section 6 - Definitions

(20) Animal: An animal is a live member of a vertebrate species including any fish or amphibian that is capable of self-feeding; or any reptile, bird or mammal, that has passed the mid-point of gestation or incubation for the particular species, other than any human being; or a live adult decapod crustacean, that is, a lobster, crab, crayfish; or a live adult cephalopod including an octopus, squid, cuttlefish, or nautilus.

(21) Animal Ethics Committee (AEC): The Committee of the University charged with ensuring that all care and use of animals is conducted in compliance with the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) 8th Edition 2013 (updated 2021)(the Code) issued by the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#) (NHMRC) of Australia and relevant state legislation including the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 \(Vic\)](#) and the [Wildlife Act 1975 \(Vic\)](#). The AEC works to ensure that the use of animals is justified, provides for the welfare of those animals and incorporates the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3R's). The AEC advises research and teaching staff and students at the University regarding standards for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. The AEC monitors the welfare of animals and provides reports on approved research and teaching activities to both state and federal governments as required.

(22) Investigator: Any person who uses animals for research or educational purposes. Includes researchers, teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students involved in research, teaching, artistic or performance projects, and people involved in product testing, environmental testing, production of biological products and wildlife surveys.

(23) Pets: Animals under the care and control of individuals who are kept primarily for companionship rather than as assistance animals.

(24) Research: All conduct leading up to, in preparation for, during and after the completion and reporting of:

- a. a creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge; or
- b. an investigation undertaken to gain original knowledge, validate previous research, or use existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.

(25) Teaching: Definition consistent with other Learning & Teaching policies.

(26) Tissue: Any part of an animal, whether extracted from a living animal or a dead animal. Tissue includes blood and blood products.

(27) Use: Anything done to or with an animal for the purposes of research, teaching or artistic expression. "Use" does not imply a necessity for physical contact between the animal and the relevant human beings (i.e., it can include observation).

Status and Details

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