

Subject: Death as an Endpoint

Source: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
Effective Date: 02/12/2024
Replaces: 05/11/2020
Applies to: Personnel involved in research or teaching studies involving animals
Reference: Animal Welfare Act (AWA); PHS Policy on Humane Care & Use of Laboratory Animals; Guide for the Care & Use of Laboratory Animals


02/12/2024

Introduction

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) maintains oversight review for federally mandated rules and regulations with regard to animal research, ethics, misconduct and biomedical research for the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus (CU Denver | Anschutz).

Policy Statement

This policy is intended to detail the requirements for humane endpoints in animal research projects

- AWA and PHS Policy require that animal pain and distress be minimized in any experiment.
- Whenever possible investigators are to euthanize animals prior to the actual death of the animal - if experimental validity of death as endpoint/survivability studies will not be compromised. These objectives assume that investigators can differentiate between animals which are found morbid (i.e. affected with disease and illness), and those which are found moribund (i.e. in the state of dying). The IACUC requires that an investigator can judge and should perform euthanasia on moribund animals based on objective signs of dying depending on experience with the animal model, professional judgment and the experimental protocol.
- Some of the known signs of illness or dying which may be applied can be found in the [UC Denver Guidelines for Endpoints in Animal Study Proposals](#), as an educational service to investigators. The use of such information will allow the investigator to understand that the combination of signs indicating euthanasia may vary with experimental endpoint.
- Investigators are required to justify their endpoints, or agree that they can judge and will perform euthanasia on animals found moribund in a particular protocol. Investigators are expected to monitor experimental animals on a frequency based on the protocol and experimental procedures and conditions being used, but not less than weekly. This frequency should be outlined in the IACUC protocol and provisions for increasing the frequency of observation should be made on a protocol dependent basis.
- The IACUC may require that animals found moribund will be euthanized, even when provided scientific justification. The Attending Veterinarian or their delegate veterinarian has the authority to ensure welfare of animals and can require euthanasia of moribund animals.
- If experimental death itself is the required endpoint, the investigator must receive approval to conduct such studies by providing strong scientific justification to the IACUC.
- Inconvenience or increased costs alone are not justifiable reasons.
- The use of death as an endpoint in animal experiments at CU Denver | Anschutz is highly discouraged.

Per regulatory requirements, failure to comply with this policy may result in notification of your funding agency (e.g. NIH) and regulatory agencies (e.g. USDA) that your research has violated federal and/or local policies regarding the humane use of animals. This notification may affect continuous funding of your animal-related research. Further, depending on the violation, you may be required to take additional training and/or your privilege to conduct animal research at CU Denver | Anschutz might be temporarily suspended or even completely revoked.