

GUIDELINES

Register of Projects Deemed Not to Require Animal Ethics Approval

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1. When should a project be added to the Register?

(i) Are live animals to be used?

Animal: The Code defines an ‘animal’ as any live non-human vertebrates, that is fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, encompassing domestic animals, purpose-bred animals, livestock, wildlife, and also cephalopods, such as octopus and squid.

‘Use’: ‘Use’ includes using parts of live or dead animals, as defined above. It includes the observation of animals in the field. It also includes the use of animal tissue in the instance where the tissue is recovered from an animal that has been killed for the purpose of the Project.

- If Yes: An Animal Ethics Application is required.
- If No: Proceed to question (ii).
- If Unsure: Contact the Animal Ethics Officer (animal.welfare@flinders.edu.au) for further clarification.

Note: Where a creature that falls outside the Code definition of an ‘animal’ (for example, a species of insect) is to be used and such use may incidentally or necessarily impact on ‘animals’ as defined in the Code, or their environment, an application must be submitted.

(ii) If you are NOT planning to use LIVE animals:

The Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) requires you to advise them of the intended source of the tissue and its intended use. Projects which might be included on the “Register” are described below. For instructions on how to **submit a project for addition to the Register**, see section 4.

2. Projects which might be included on the “Register”

Projects which can be included on the Register fall into two main categories, although additional categories are also considered. The first main category is “observational studies” (including the collection of some biological material including faeces and maybe hair and feathers), and the second main category is “opportunistic sourcing” of whole dead animals or tissue including intact organs. A third minor category is “by-catch”, which covers the capture of animals not covered by the Code with little likelihood of invertebrate or vertebrate (covered by the Code) by-catch, and a fourth minor category is “data mining”, which is an analytic process designed to explore data in search of consistent patterns and/or systematic relationships between variables.

A. Observational Studies

The default situation is that observational studies require ethics approval irrespective of whether the target species is vertebrate or invertebrate.

To qualify for the Register it is necessary to confirm that:

- (i) The observation does not involve any manipulation (or disturbance) of the animals' environment, including food sources. For example, if a project involved observing a captive animal in which the feeding protocols were being manipulated by the investigator, then the project would need formal ethics approval.
 - (ii) There will be no impact on any young of target or non-target species.
- This includes the shore-based observation using (telescopes, binoculars, drones, and possibly telephoto camera lenses) of marine mammals and foraging birds. Other examples include the use of bat detectors to document the presence of various bat species, and the use of camouflaged hides placed at significant distances (e.g. about a kilometre) from rock wallabies.
 - The placing of cameras in or near nests and burrows would usually require ethics approval, whereas the placing a GoPro camera in a lobster pot typically doesn't need approval as it is unlikely to influence the by-catch.

B. Opportunistic Sourcing

(i) Collection of faeces (scat), food residues, hair, fur, feathers etc , observation of unused burrows, nests, animal tracks, etc:

The same principles apply as for observation of living animals, and it is the responsibility of the investigators to explain why there would not be any impact (or manipulation) on the animals or their environment.

(ii) Opportunistic sourcing of whole (dead) animals:

Projects can be placed on the Register once it has been confirmed that the investigator will not be in any way responsible for the death of any of the animals, and that the killing was not on behalf of the investigator. Examples include:

- Sourcing of fish from commercial fish mongers.
- Acquiring from commercial aquarium shops of ornamental fish that have died whilst being held.
- Collecting whole fish or tissue from fish (including sharks) caught by recreational anglers after “weigh-ins” during fishing tournaments.
- Acquiring wildlife that had died naturally or were euthanized on veterinarian advice from wildlife and conservation parks.

(iii) Opportunistic sourcing of tissues and organs:

Projects can use “offal” from abattoirs, which can either be purchased or donated.

It has been deemed (by staff at DEW) that, in some instances, the collection of small amounts of blood during routine health checks of zoo animals for use in undergraduate classes can be added to the Register, and does not require full ethics approval.

(iv) Sourcing of tissue from other institutions:

Sometimes a project involves sourcing tissue from other institutions, which includes other Universities, museums, and research institutes. In this instance, it is necessary that details of the source, including all relevant licences and ethics approvals, are provided.

(v) Sourcing of tissue from another Flinders approved project:

This is desirable in that it fits in with the Code expectation of reduction, and there are also significant economical and possibly infrastructure benefits. In this instance it is necessary to confirm that all animals used will be sourced opportunistically; that is no animal will be used exclusively for the “secondary” project. This is not a problem when the animals have been euthanized as part of the original project. Investigators should read sections 1.22 and 2.3.15 of the 8th Edition of the Code.

C. By-Catch

It can be wrongly assumed that as the target species is not covered by the “Code”, that ethics approval is not needed. The AWC has considered several applications of this type and determined that ethics approval was actually needed because there was the potential for by-catch of invertebrates or vertebrates (who are covered by the Code) and other animals covered under the code. Examples include sampling of streams and estuaries for invertebrates with the possibility of capturing fish (including noxious species {e.g. carp, mosquito fish} which still need to be treated to minimise pain and stress), reptiles (e.g. turtles), amphibians and small cephalopods.

D. Data Mining

Data mining is an analytic process designed to explore data in search of consistent patterns and/or systematic relationships between variables. For data mining, there is no need to use animals as the data has already been collected previously (whether by yourself or another group). However, these type of projects should be added to the Register to ensure that the data has been collected in an ethical manner according to all appropriate guidelines and legislations, and to highlight (if queried by a journal or member of the public) that you have only been involved with the data post-collection.

3. Projects that should NOT go onto the Register

Any project where full animal ethics approval is required from the AWC including (but not limited to):

- (i) All experiments using purpose-bred animals. An exception would be the sourcing of tissue from animals euthanized as part of, or at the conclusion of, another AWC approved project
- (ii) Projects involving the observation or capture of invertebrate species (not covered by the Code) where there is the possibility of impact on non-target invertebrate or vertebrate species (that are covered by the Code).

- (iii) Observations of invertebrate or vertebrate species (that are covered by the Code) where there is the possibility of impact on non-target invertebrate or vertebrate species (that are covered by the Code), or a disturbance of their environment.

4. How to submit a project for addition to the Register

To submit a project to the Register, researchers must complete a short Register application form accessed through *ResearchNow Ethics & Biosafety*.

1. If this is the first time you are using *ResearchNow Ethics & Biosafety*, open your Oka dashboard and click the green “Add Apps” button to find this chicklet.
2. In *ResearchNow Ethics & Biosafety*, click “Create Project” – “Animal Ethics Register Application”.
3. Once submitted, approval generally takes 1-2 days.

5. Historical

In the very early years of the AWC, **all** projects involving animals (vertebrates and invertebrates) required ethics approval. In order to ensure compliance with the “Code”, a mechanism was needed to take the decision making process away from the investigators regarding whether a project required AWC approval or not. In the early days, investigators were encouraged to get a written statement (from e.g. the Chair of the AWS-C or AERSC) that a project did not require ethics approval. A “Register of Projects Deemed Not to Require Animal Ethics Approval” was introduced in 2006.

Motives for introducing the Register:

The first advantage was having a quick and efficient mechanism for dealing with projects and taking the decision making process out of the hands of the investigators to avoid accusations of bias and occurrences of any mistakes.

Secondly, the University needs to have records of all projects that involved animals and animal tissue. This is necessary so that research funding can be released to the investigator, and so that the University can quickly respond to queries from the general community, animal activists or the popular media on aspects of any project involving animals.

Advantages of maintaining the Register:

Adding a project to the Register is very quick, only taking a couple of minutes, and approval is granted within a couple of days (whereas it can take several months to receive full ethics approval).