

Worksheet to Assist in Addressing the Required Points 3 and 4 of the Vertebrate Animal Section (VAS) for NIH Applications and Proposals

Members of NIH scientific review groups are instructed to evaluate the 5 point VAS to determine if it is complete and if plans for the use of vertebrate animals are appropriate relative to the scientific work proposed. Points 1, 2, and 5 are relatively straightforward and the detail expected has not changed significantly (describe the animals and their proposed use; provide justifications for the use of animals, choice of species, and number of animals to be used; and describe methods of euthanasia). However, more detail may now be requested for Points 3 and 4. A detailed worksheet on the VAS has been developed by the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) and is available at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/VASchecklist.pdf>.

To assist **investigators at The University of Texas at Austin who house animals in the Animal Resources Center** with the writing of those sections, the following verbiage and advice are offered. *Please note: the VAS should not be used to describe any detailed methods and procedures that are part of the research plan.*

If you have additional questions about completing the VAS, please contact the Attending Veterinarian, Dr. Glen Otto, at gotto@mail.utexas.edu or (512) 471-2392.

Face Page Information:

- Vertebrate Animal Use: YES
- Date of IACUC approval: enter either initial protocol approval date or “PENDING”
- The University of Texas at Austin Animal Welfare Assurance Number: A4107-01

Point 3 - Provide a general description of veterinary care, including veterinary support that is specifically relevant to the proposed procedures.

Suggested Response: The University of Texas at Austin has an approved Animal Welfare Assurance, A4107-01, on file with the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and complies with the USDA Animal Welfare Act Regulations, the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and the recommendations in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. The University of Texas at Austin is accredited by the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International.

Indicate the following:

- A brief account of veterinary staff and their availability

Suggested Response: The Animal Resources Center (ARC) employs two (2) full-time laboratory animal veterinarians, one of whom is on call at all times, 24/7. The Director is a board-certified laboratory animal veterinarian and the Clinical Veterinarian has received specialty residency training from an ACLAM-recognized program and is

experienced in laboratory animal science and medicine. In addition, trained veterinary technicians are available to perform monitoring and treatment under veterinary supervision. Emergency contact information is listed in facility postings and is also available as part of the voice mail tree on the main ARC phone number.

- The regular schedule of monitoring of animals by veterinary staff

Suggested Response: Campus guidelines require that animal observation and health reporting systems are in place at all centralized or satellite facilities. All animals are observed every day including weekends and holidays by animal husbandry staff, trained research staff, or veterinary staff. All animal observations are documented. Veterinary personnel are available to observe, examine and treat animals as indicated when notified of a problem by husbandry and/or research staff.

- Any additional monitoring and veterinary support that may be required to ensure humane care, if relevant to the procedures proposed (e.g., post-surgical)

Suggested Response: [Insert specific animal health monitoring and veterinary care needs for your project.]

- Indicators for veterinary intervention to alleviate discomfort, distress or pain, if relevant

Suggested Response: [Describe what criteria will be used to determine if animals exhibiting clinical or behavioral changes should be euthanized. Insert specific humane endpoints (e.g., points at which an experimental animal's pain and/or distress is terminated, minimized, or decreased by taking actions such as euthanizing the animal humanely, terminating a painful procedure, or giving treatment to relieve pain and/or distress) as listed in your IACUC protocol to supplement this generic statement as needed. If you are submitting the proposal before IACUC approval, you can contact the veterinary staff for advice.]

If animals exhibit any indication of illness or distress, the veterinary staff confers with laboratory personnel to recommend appropriate antibiotics, analgesics, or other treatments, including euthanasia, and to formulate a response plan.

Point 4 - Describe procedures to minimize discomfort, distress, pain and injury. Indicate the following:

- Circumstances relevant to the proposed work, when animals may experience discomfort, distress, pain or injury.

Suggested Response: [Insert specific circumstances in which animals may experience discomfort, distress, pain, or injury for your project.]

- Procedures to alleviate discomfort, distress, pain or injury

Suggested Response: [Insert specific methods used to minimize pain and distress based on your IACUC protocol. If you are submitting the proposal before IACUC approval, you can contact the veterinary staff for advice. Many anesthetics, analgesics, sedatives, NSAIDs and other pharmacological means to alleviate pain and discomfort on research animals are available upon consultation with the ARC veterinary staff. Non-pharmacologic means may include animal acclimation handling, comfort items (bedding, padding, thermal pads), social/group housing, and positive reinforcement.]

- Identify (by name or class) any tranquilizers, analgesics, anesthetics and other treatments (e.g., antibiotics) and describe their use

Suggested Response: [This answer is specific to your grant proposal and so there is no suggested response. Investigators are encouraged to consult with the ARC veterinarians during preparation of experimental protocols for advice regarding the most suitable anesthetic and analgesic protocols.]

- Provisions for special care or housing that may be necessary after experimental procedures

Suggested Response: [This answer is specific to your grant proposal and so there is no suggested response.]

- Plans for post-surgical care, if survival surgeries are proposed

Suggested Response: [Insert plans for post-surgical care for your project.]

- Indicators for humane experimental endpoints, if relevant

Suggested Response: All of the personnel working on this study will read and apply the IACUC Guidelines for Endpoint Monitoring and Humane Termination:
<http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/iacuc/forms/guideline08.pdf>

[Note: If the proposal involves tumor induction, utilize the IACUC's Guidelines for Maintenance of Tumors and Hybridomas in Rodents:
<http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/iacuc/forms/guideline09.pdf>].

- Describe the use of restraint devices, if relevant

Suggested Response: [Note: If a completed AUP for the grant activities is available, repeat here the information supplied in Protocol Information > Husbandry.]