

Policy for Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents at Saint Mary's University

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Purpose and Responsibilities

As a certified institution of the [Canadian Council on Animal Care](#) (CCAC), Saint Mary's University is required to have a policy for the reporting and escalation of animal welfare incidents, as outlined in the CCAC's '[Certification Of Animal Ethics And Care Programs](#)' document and associated [FAQ](#).

The Policy for Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents is ultimately the responsibility of the Vice President Academic and Research (VPAR). The VPAR has designated day-to-day responsibility for the Policy to the Associate Vice President Research (AVPR). The AVPR has authorized the SMU Animal Care Committee (SMU ACC), and, in particular, the Chair of the Committee, the Animal Care Coordinator, and the Animal Care Veterinarian to manage the reporting and resolution of animal welfare incidents, to review it annually, and make recommendations on any changes to the AVPR.

Animal Welfare Incidents

The CCAC defines an animal welfare incident as “an event that leads to the unanticipated death of research, teaching or testing animals, or poses an immediate and significant threat to animal health or welfare” ([FAQ: Certification Of Animal Ethics And Care Programs](#)). This can include, but is not limited to, the following situations associated with animal deaths or threats to health or welfare:

- “a catastrophic failure of critical life-support system(s)”;
- “disregard of, or unintended failure to follow [approved] practices or procedures”;
- “significant and unanticipated morbidity or mortality unrelated to the above”; and
- “serious or repeated noncompliance with CCAC standards that leads to the suspension by the animal care committee or the institution of an animal-based activity that threatens animal health or welfare”.

An animal welfare incident is reportable to the SMU ACC if:

- If the health or welfare of $\geq 20\%$ of the population is compromised in a manner not described and approved in the animal use protocol;
- if morbidity or mortality is $\geq 20\%$ of the population when no baseline morbidity or mortality is approved in animal use protocol, or if population morbidity or mortality is $\geq 20\%$ above baseline mortalities levels outlined, justified and approved in the animal use protocol.

A population is defined as the total number of animals of a given species on an approved protocol. An incident can be acute (e.g., over a few hours or days) or occur on a longer time scale (e.g., the length of the protocol). This should be reported to the ACC within 24 hours of the acute incident or when $\geq 20\%$ of animals have health and welfare or mortality concerns beyond those described and approved in the animal use protocol.

If an unexpected incident occurs that leads to significant unexpected mortality or morbidity, but is below the levels outlined above, it must be discussed with the ACC Coordinator and ACC Veterinarian to determine if an incident report should be submitted.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of:

- the principle investigator (PI) to report all animal welfare incidents to the SMU ACC within 24 hours of an incident occurring;
- the SMU ACC to monitor and ensure compliance of animal use in research and teaching, review submitted animal welfare incident reports at regularly scheduled meetings, report incidents to the VPAR or AVPR and CCAC if mandatory, and withdraw animal use protocol approval until resolution, if necessary;
- the VPAR/AVPR to oversee the Committee and consult with the ACC if resolution of the incident cannot be reached.

Guideline for Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents

The procedure for reporting animal welfare incidents are as follows:

1. The SMU Animal Welfare Incident Form is sent electronically to animalcare@smu.ca and the SMU ACC Veterinarian by the PI within 24 hours of the acute incident or the point at which a longer incident reaches a reportable level (i.e., $\geq 20\%$ mortality or welfare/health concerns beyond that approved in a protocol) .
2. The SMU ACC Veterinarian will assess the urgency and impact of the incident and initiate actions as appropriate (ie., medical care, procedures, etc.).
3. The SMU ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will review information submitted by the PI, conduct further investigation to determine the cause of the incident if appropriate, and ensure compliance with SMU ACC and CCAC guidelines
4. The SMU ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will determine whether the incident must be formally reported to the CCAC based on the CCAC guidelines for Reportable Animal Welfare Incidents. The Chair will report the incident to the CCAC and VPAR/AVPR within 10 days of the event.
5. The SMU ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will collaborate with the PI to review protocols and mitigate reoccurrence.
6. The PI and/or Facility Manager will review animal use protocols, standard operating procedures, and any other relevant animal care training material with animal users if needed.

7. The SMU ACC will review the full animal welfare incident report and resolution at the next regularly scheduled ACC meeting. As with all ACC matters, ACC members who are in conflict of interest must recuse themselves from discussion of the incident unless the ACC requires clarification on any part of the event.
8. If resolution cannot be achieved by the SMU ACC Chair in collaboration with PIs, the SMU AVPR and/or VPR will work in consultation with all parties to resolve the incident.

References

CCAC Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs:

<https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/Certification-of-animal-ethics-and-care-programs.pdf>

CCAC Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs FAQ:

https://www.ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/CCAC_FAQs_on_certification_of_animal_ethics_and_care_programs.pdf