Policy # BP-08-2013

Policy Title: Biomedical vs. Agricultural Use of Agricultural Species

Background: Agricultural animals are defined as horses and farm animals “...such as, but not limited to, livestock or poultry, used or intended for use as food or fiber, or livestock or poultry used or intended for use for improving animal nutrition, breeding, management, or production efficiency, or for improving the quality of food or fiber. “ (AWAR, 9 CFR 1.1)

The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALACi) makes the following distinction: AAALACi recognizes that the biomedical or agricultural research, testing or teaching objectives as well as the health and welfare of the animals will dictate when application of the recommendations of the Ag Guide, ILAR Guide is most appropriate. For animals in an agricultural setting, AAALACi takes the position that, in accredited programs, the housing and care for farm animals should meet the standards that prevail on a high-quality, well-managed farm. The collective professional judgment of the responsible oversight body (i.e., IACUC, Ethics Committee), principal investigator and veterinarian should determine which standard(s) applies best with regard to the care and welfare of agricultural animals, based on a performance approach in the context of the requirements of the study and the species used. The rationale for making this determination should be documented.

PHS Policy mandates that institutions use the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide) as a basis for developing and implementing a program for activities involving animals. The Guide states that it “…applies to agricultural animals used in biomedical research, including those maintained in typical farm settings.” It further emphasizes that the use of farm animals in research should be subject to the same ethical considerations as the use of other animals in research. (Guide, page 32) The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide) primarily refers to agricultural animals used in agricultural research for which the scientific objectives are to improve understanding of the animals’ use in production agriculture. It is therefore inappropriate to substitute the Ag Guide for the Guide based on the species of animal. However, there may be circumstances where it is appropriate to follow the standards of the Ag Guide in biomedical research (e.g., transmission studies of avian influenza under poultry production conditions). Information about environmental enrichment, transport, and handling in the Ag Guide may be helpful in both agricultural and biomedical research settings. Proposals to conduct such activities should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and any approval to depart from provisions of the Guide must be based on scientific justifications acceptable to the IACUC.
Policy: The IACUC will use the above criteria to classify animals and their use as either biomedical or agricultural. The IACUC will use the “Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching” for establishing appropriate standards for use of agricultural animals in non-biomedical research and teaching. When the IACUC determines that the work being described would require that agricultural animals be housed in a biomedical setting, the rationale will be documented in a letter to the PI.