Purpose:

Most research, teaching, and testing protocols using animals at Texas A&M University-Commerce have common characteristics. First, the Principal Investigator of the project is an employee of A&M-Commerce; second, the animals used in the project are University-owned animals; and third, the location in which the project is conducted is A&M-Commerce-owned property.

The contents of this guideline define the requirements for IACUC and Attending Veterinarian (AV) oversight when either privately-owned animals are used, or the location of the project is privately-owned land or when both situations apply. This document does not cover the situation where non-domesticated animals are the focus of a study since technically, they are publicly-owned.

Regulatory Requirements:

A&M-Commerce has established an Institutional Animal Care and Use Program under the approved A&M-Commerce Procedure, 15.99.05.R0.01 Animal Care and Use, and Texas A&M University System Regulation, 15.99.07 Use of Vertebrate Animals. This regulation requires compliance with the Animal Welfare Act Regulations (AWARs), the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy), the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (ILAR Guide), and the Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide). The regulation also states that “Non-member-owned vertebrate animals may not be used by a member’s faculty, students, or staff without prior approval of their IACUC.”

Use of Privately-Owned Domesticated Farm Animals on University Property:

For the situation where the use of privately-owned farm animals occurs on University-owned (or leased) property, all of the regulations, policies, and procedures applied to University-owned animals, along with standard IACUC oversight practices and procedures apply. Standard oversight practices include semiannual site inspections by the IACUC (with follow-up visits as necessary) and unrestricted access to the animals and associated health records by the Attending Veterinarian (or delegate). In the case of Privately-Owned Domesticated Animals on University Property, The Principal Investigator (or Faculty Sponsor) must file an Animal Care and Use Procedure (SOP) with the IACUC for review prior to any animals arriving on campus or any activities occurring utilizing animals in a non-teaching, non-research activity. For teaching or research activities, the PI / Sponsor must file an Animal Care and Use Protocol application with the IACUC. In addition, written consent for the activity itself and for veterinary care provisions must be signed by the Owner (or delegate). Consent may be in the form of a contract, memorandum of agreement, consent form, or other agreements.

In the case of an SOP, elements in the SOP must include: 1) provisions for non-research-related herd health and individual animal health issues such as vaccinations, deworming, injuries, infections, medications, and other veterinary medicine-related issues; 2) communications of the potential risks to the animal’s health or well-being and the specific consent for participation in light of these risks; 3) what will be the disposition of the animal(s) at the conclusion of the project; 4) the circumstances and communications required for an individual animal to be removed from the project by the owner, the PI, the IACUC, or the AV; and, 5) under what circumstances the overall project can be terminated and by whom; 6) an outline of the various responsibilities of faculty, staff, students and animal owners; and 7) IACUC compliance mechanisms.

In all cases of privately-owned domesticated farm animals on University property, the animals’ health status must be determined in advance, and quarantine and other controls implemented by the AV to ensure that the privately-owned animals’ health status comes into compliance with the rest of the herd of the same species in A&M-Commerce facilities. In situations where this is not possible, for example, if privately-owned animals are required for a project but their health status cannot be improved by the AV to match the rest of the herd, the
privately-owned animals will be required to have completely separate and bio-secure housing and use facilities, as determined by the AV, from other animals on campus of the same species. The AV will work with the PI and the owners to, in this instance, make every attempt possible to ensure the health of both the privately-owned animals and all other animals on A&M-Commerce property. In cases where this is not possible in the professional opinion of the AV, the IACUC may deny or delay approval of the activity until such time as appropriate health status of the animals or appropriate facilities to protect that health status may be achieved and acquired.

**Use of Privately-Owned Domesticated Farm Animals on Privately Owned Property**

For arrangements where the only vertebrate animal use involves the receipt of non-invasively obtained samples (blood, feces, nasal swabs, etc.) collected by employees of the farm (non-A&M-Commerce personnel) and transferred to A&M-Commerce investigators or personnel for use without remuneration, the IACUC will defer oversight for the sample collection to the standard operating procedures and practices of the private farm. IACUC oversight will be restricted to those practices and procedures involving A&M-Commerce personnel and to provision of advisory and zoonotic disease information to any other relevant University bodies.

For situations where the use of privately-owned farm animals occurs on privately-owned property, where the PI or his/her laboratory personnel are active participants in specimen collection and in minor non-invasive procedures, the IACUC will delegate much of the standard IACUC oversight practices and procedures to the PI. In the case of Privately-Owned Domesticated Farm Animals on Privately Owned Property, the PI or Faculty Sponsor must file an application for animal use activity approval with the IACUC, in the form of an SOP for non-research, non-teaching activities, and an AUP for research or teaching activities. The A&M-Commerce Principal Investigator (PI) must provide written assurance to the IACUC initially upon submission of a new protocol application, and on an annual basis, that the facility meets or exceeds contemporary farm performance standards (those typical of well-run farms in the area) of animal care and husbandry. The assurance should be sent to the IACUC office which will attach the document to the appropriate animal care and use protocol at each annual review.

Subsequent to the initial assurance, in the event that the PI becomes aware of, or has reason to suspect, that the facility no longer meets or exceeds contemporary farm performance standards of animal care and husbandry, or that animal abuse has, or may be occurring at the facility, the PI must immediately inform the IACUC office and immediately cease all research activities at the facility until the issue is addressed by the IACUC. In such case, the level of IACUC oversight will be elevated. An IACUC investigation will ensue with the results and recommendations by the IACUC investigative committee brought before the full IACUC. The outcome will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

For the situation where the use of privately-owned farm animals occurs on privately-owned property where the PI is an active participant in more involved procedures such as invasive procedures, tissue sample collection, rectal/uterine palpation, etc., additional oversight by the IACUC and AV will be required. Specific oversight procedures needed in these situations will be determined by the IACUC in consideration of the specific circumstances.

**Use of University-Owned Domesticated Farm Animals on Privately-Owned Property**

For the situation where use of University-owned farm animals occurs on privately-owned (or leased) property, all of the regulations and policies applied to University-owned animals, along with standard IACUC oversight practices and procedures, apply. Standard oversight practices include semiannual site inspections by the IACUC (with follow-up visits as necessary) and unrestricted access to the animals and associated health records by the Attending Veterinarian (or delegate). In the case of University-Owned Domesticated Farm Animals on Privately-Owned Property, The Principal Investigator (or Faculty Sponsor) must file an Animal Care and Use Procedure (SOP) with the IACUC for review prior to any animals arriving on campus or any activities occurring utilizing animals in a non-teaching, non-research activity. For teaching or research activities, the PI / Sponsor must file an Animal Care and Use Protocol AUP) application with the IACUC.
In the case of an SOP, elements in the SOP must include: 1) provisions for non-research-related herd health and individual animal health issues such as vaccinations, deworming, injuries, infections, medications, and other veterinary medicine-related issues; 2) communications of the potential risks to the animal’s health or well-being and the specific consent for participation in light of these risks; 3) what will be the disposition of the animal(s) at the conclusion of the project; 4) the circumstances and communications required for an individual animal to be removed from the project by the PI, the IACUC, or the AV; 5) under what circumstances the overall project can be terminated and by whom; and, 6) access to the University animals by the IACUC and AV and their respective staff will be completely unrestricted.

Under certain situations (e.g., activities that are considered to cause no or minimal potential pain/distress, are conducted in appropriate facilities, are conducted by experts in the field, etc.) the IACUC reserves the right to make exceptions to this policy on a case-by-case basis and approve proposed activities. Additionally, in circumstances where the non-A&M-Commerce facility has its own controlling IACUC, USDA Registration, and AAALAC Accreditation, the A&M-Commerce IACUC may choose to accept regulatory documents from the host institution in lieu of A&M-Commerce IACUC imposed regulations.

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