

Subject area: Research and doctoral education and Undergraduate and Master's education

Document type: Policy
Decision-maker: Vice-Chancellor
Organisational unit: Division of Planning
Reference: Joakim Ögger

Decision date: 15/12/2015
Effective as of: 15/12/2015
Valid until: Further notice
To be updated by: as needed

Document(s) repealed: –

Annex to: Vice-Chancellor's decision of 15 December 2015 on policy on the use of animals in research and education at SLU

Policy on the use of animals in research and education at SLU

1 Activities with research animals at SLU

The EU and the Council of Europe define research animals as those that only experience some form of suffering during their use. In Sweden, our definition of research animals differs from its European equivalent – the *purpose* determines whether an animal is a research animal. This means that all animals used for scientific research, teaching, diagnosing illnesses, manufacture of pharmaceuticals or chemical products, or other similar purposes are classed as research animals and are covered by animal welfare legislation, even if they are not subjected to painful procedures. Consequently:

all animals included in SLU research activities are classified as research animals, regardless of whether they are privately owned animals, wild animals or animals at the various SLU research facilities, and are therefore included in this policy.

All use of animals for scientific and educational purposes at SLU is to be conducted in a responsible manner, with focus on the animal's health and welfare. When planning research, alternatives to the use of animals must be considered and used where possible. In each case, the animal's discomfort is to be weighed against the knowledge that can be expected from the animal experimentation. *All staff involved in planning research on animals or who work with animals that are used for scientific or educational purposes, must obtain and follow this policy.*

1.1 All use of research/teaching animals for activities at SLU presupposes that those planning the activities are aware of and follow the legislation and guidelines applicable to the procedures. In the event of uncertainty or discovery of

unsatisfactory conditions, the coordinator for laboratory animal welfare, legislation and education (djurforsok@slu.se) must be contacted.

1.2 The Council for Animals in Research and Education (Föd) is to function as SLU's animal welfare body and therefore work actively to prioritise animal welfare within the organisation. The Council for Animals in Research and Education must follow the Swedish Board of Agriculture's regulations (SJVFS 2015:24 Article L 150). This includes providing advice to staff regarding animal welfare, as well as establishing and inspecting internal routine descriptions for the supervision, reporting and monitoring of the animals' welfare and the comprehensive work with animal welfare at the organisation.

1.3 All use of living animals for scientific or educational purposes must be preceded by an animal testing ethics review, unless their use is exempt from the ethics review requirement.¹ Activities must follow the ethical permission.

1.4 When planning an animal experiment, the person responsible for the planning must consult with the director approved by the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the advisory veterinarian/expert for the activity. The person must also follow the standard operating procedures that have been designed for the activities at the division/unit concerned.

1.5 Planning and conduct of animal testing must follow the Three R's (*Reduce, Refine, Replace*). This means that:

- as few animals as possible must be used, if there is an alternative way to obtain the same statistically significant result (*Reduce*).
- the living conditions and care of animals used must undergo continual improvement, and the research methods used must minimise stress and pain (*Refine*).
- the development of new procedures is to be followed for methods that can replace the use of live animals in research. These methods are to be used where possible (*Replace*).

1.6 Planning and implementation of animal experiments must be conducted so that individual animal species or biological diversity is not threatened, and be in accordance with a sustainable use of natural resources and care of the environment.

1.7 All staff who use or participate in the use of live animals, or care for animals used for scientific purposes are to have completed training in laboratory animal science for researchers in accordance with legislation (SJVFS 2015:24 Article 150) *before* commencing work, and must have the requisite practical competence. Competency is to be inspected by the research animal veterinarian/expert or supervisor. This also applies for students who will independently conduct studies on live animals, e.g. as part of their degree project. Training of skills should precede practical participation in activities included in animal experiments, to

¹ Exemption from the requirement for ethical permission or approval: SJVFS 2015:24 Article L 150, Chapter 2, Sections 15–22

ensure the practical competence has been achieved. Staff must be continually offered further training and given the opportunity to participate in this during work hours.

1.8 When animals that have been used in SLU research and/or education are to be re-homed, the SLU policy for re-homing animals must be followed.

1.9 SLU must have a coordinator for matters concerning research animals. The coordinator is responsible for education in laboratory animal science for all those involved with animal experiments at SLU providing information and advice regarding questions about research animals, inspecting permits, coordinating supervision and collation of statistics.

1.10 Work with animals included in experiments must be designed with consideration for staff safety and the work environment.

1.11 In the event of national and international collaborations that involve animal experiments, consideration is to be made for the animals' welfare and ethics concerning the use of animals.

1.12 The staff web must provide updated information on the applicable rules regarding the use of animals for research.

1.13 SLU must actively work as consultant on matters regarding research animals, and be represented in instances that address animal research matters with the public. For example, SLU is currently represented in:

- The Swedish Research Council's Expert Group for Laboratory Animal Science.
- The Swedish Board of Agriculture's national committee for animal research matters and its two committees: ethics and education committee and user committee;
- The website www.djurforsok.info, both in the steering group and on the editorial board.
- Regional ethical committees on animal experiments
- Central Ethical Committee on Animal Experiments
- National Consortium for Laboratory Animal Education and Training (NCLASET)
- Steering group for the HVE course in animal care and biomedical technology.

1.14 SLU must work for transparency in activities involving research on animals, and actively provide information about the research. Researchers are to be encouraged to provide the Division of Communication with information about their research. The division is responsible for spreading information related to research findings involving animal testing, in a way that is characterised by transparency, quality, and social commitment. Furthermore, researchers who are contacted directly by the media must have close contact with the Division of Communication to ensure effective and correct information distribution.

2 Use of animals in education at SLU

The university's areas of responsibility include animal husbandry, health and welfare of animals being used by humans. SLU offers professional education and training for prospective veterinarians, animal agronomists, veterinary nurses, equine scientists and also general higher education courses for future work with animals.

Healthy animals are used for educational purposes within SLU's courses and programmes, either SLU's own livestock, laboratory animals that have been purchased and privately owned animals, used for i.e. performing palpations or when the animals are received as patients at the University Animal Hospital. Certain degree programmes also include wild animals, e.g. in connection with hunting and fishing. Other degree programmes limit the use of animals to study visits at farms and other animal facilities. During study visits, certain voluntary animal handling may take place under supervision, e.g. exterior evaluations, hoof care and sheep shearing. Cadavers and tissue preparations from healthy and ill animals are used during teaching and skills training. The material is primarily taken from animals that have been euthanised for reasons other than for teaching purposes. In the professional programmes at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, practical training of animal handling is very important to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Therefore, training of animal handling and techniques for different procedures is done by the student under supervision, and in the manner it is to be conducted in practice. The purpose of the training, focusing on animal welfare, is to promote sustainable use of animals, good production, health and function.

The appropriate regulations must be followed when using animals for teaching purposes. All use of animals and materials obtained from animals in teaching at SLU presupposes that those responsible are aware of and follow legislation and guidelines applicable to the activities. All use of live animals in courses and programmes conducted at SLU's animal facilities are to have undergone an animal ethics review. Exceptions from the requirements for ethical review apply to the animal patients that visit the clinic who will not be subjected to anything they would not otherwise be subjected to, pure skills training in horse riding, driving and handling as part of the Equine Science programme and to study visits to animal facilities with the purpose of observing or participating in ongoing activities (not animal experiments)². *All learning elements that involve the handling of live or dead animals must be carefully prepared and result in the necessary professional skills. These elements can therefore not be replaced by animal-free alternatives, nor can they be excluded from the course or programme.*

2.1 Information and ethical discussion must precede the learning elements. Students are to be given the opportunity to obtain the SLU policy for the use of

² Exemption from the requirement for ethical permission or approval: SJVFS 2015:24 Article L 150, Chapter 2, Sections 15–22

animals in teaching if they plan to participate in a degree programme where handling of animals and animal materials is included.

2.2 All degree programmes and free-standing courses must contain a summary of the elements where live animals, animal corpses or animal tissue are included, which prospective students can obtain before they apply for a place.

2.3 When learning elements with living animals, animal corpses, organs or tissue materials are included in a degree programme, comprehensive information about these elements is to be provided during the programme's first semester. Furthermore, courses or course blocks/years should begin with an ethical discussion regarding the specific animal handling. The goal of these exercises and the reasons why they cannot be achieved using alternative methods without the use of animals must be clear.

2.4 Teaching elements using dead animals should, if possible, begin with the use of alternative methods, followed by training on dead animals. Primarily, dissections are to be conducted on animal organs and tissues from animals that would nevertheless have been euthanised for reasons other than for teaching purposes. When handling dead animals and tissue materials, the animal corpses and tissue material must be handled with respect. Once students are deemed to have obtained sufficient skills under supervision, the student may conduct dissection themselves.

2.5 Learning elements involving live animals should, if possible, begin by using alternative methods, followed by training on dead animals, training on live animals that will be euthanised and, finally, training on animals that will survive. For the programmes in veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing, this also includes the handling and treatment of sick animals.

2.6 When handling live animals, the supervisor must be available and the animal is to be handled in such a way that it is not subject to stress or unnecessary suffering. Behavioural studies, handling and palpation exercises or similar can be conducted on commercial herds, research animals at SLU or privately owned animals. The person responsible for the animals must give their permission for the use of each animal.

2.7 To be allowed to work independently with live animals as part of education and research (practical elements, such as daily maintenance routines are exempt), students must have participated in a course in laboratory animal science for researchers in accordance with legislation (SJVFS 2015:24, Article L 150) *prior* to commencing their work, and must have obtained sufficient skills under supervision.

2.8 For skills training in surgical procedures where the animals will be euthanised in conjunction with the anaesthesia, the supervisor must be present. Prior to the anaesthetic, the animal is to be handled in such a way that it is not subjected to unnecessary suffering. As far as possible, animals that would nevertheless have been euthanised for reasons other than for research purposes are to be used.

2.9 Training in clinical examination techniques and simple surgical procedures may occur on both animals used for educational purposes and animal patients. In the latter instance, the animal's owner is assumed to be aware that students will participate in the examination and treatment of the animal, as they are using the services of a university animal hospital. Procedures are to be conducted under supervision, and the animal is to be handled in such a way that it is not subjected to unnecessary suffering.