



This document has been developed by The Australian National University's (ANU) Research Ethics Office. It has been endorsed by the ANU Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee (AEEC). It is designed to provide guidance regarding current best practice to institutional animal users and carers on the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. It has been prepared in consultation with the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th edition 2013.

Document 005: Guidelines for the use of volunteers in animal based research projects

Background

Any person who uses animals for research or teaching purposes are considered investigators under the NHMRC's [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013](#) (The Code).

The Code requires that a "Person with ultimate responsibility" [Principal Investigator (PI)] must ensure that all investigators are aware of their responsibilities under The Code. This includes who is responsible for the overall management and conduct of an individual project and for ensuring that clear lines of responsibility, communication and accountability regarding the care and use of animals in the project are identified. As individuals assisting with research, volunteers have a degree of responsibility for activities they undertake under an approved ethics protocol. Also of importance is the Primary Investigator's responsibility to ensure that all volunteers working under an approved protocol are appropriately trained and briefed in the procedures they will be undertaking.

General Information and Considerations

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Prior to volunteers commencing

Prior to commencing work on animal-based projects Principal Investigators must ensure volunteer investigators are provided with:

- a written lay description of activities that volunteer investigators may be asked to perform. This should include the minimum expectations of the role, the level of supervision to be provided and the opt-out processes;
- the details of the AEEC approval, including any relevant conditions on the approval;
- procedures and an outline of any risks involved with those procedures and how they are to be safely managed



- training and assessment appropriate to the tasks the volunteer may be required to perform (where applicable). Records of training and competency must be kept by the PI and copies provided to the volunteer;
- emergency procedures (for animal welfare and WH&S) relating to what volunteers will be required to do in the case of an animal emergency
- [ANU Volunteer Declaration form](#)
- a copy of the Code or the link to the Code on the NHMRC website
- opportunities to ask questions; and
- information relating to how to manage complaints or concerns. This should include details of senior people to contact regarding project concerns, as well as contact details for those outside the project such as the ANU Veterinarians, the ANU Animal Ethics Team and ANU Central HR.

This information may be provided in a specific SOP for the intended work but must be accompanied by a verbal briefing of the key information. For information provided verbally, a record and acknowledgement by the volunteer should be kept. An optional Volunteer Fieldwork Checklist, *AEEC 025_ANU Field Work Check List* is also available on the Animal Ethics Webpage for those who would like to work off a guidance document (note, the use of the checklist is not compulsory).

Post work briefings

Post work briefings should be conducted to ensure all investigators obtain project activity details from volunteers from the each session. Briefings should provide the opportunity to ask questions and discuss what went well, clear up any uncertainty and identify areas for improvement.

New protocol or amendment applications

Where it is anticipated volunteers will be involved, the AEEC requires all new protocol submissions to provide examples of documentation to support the requirements in this guideline.

Minimum Requirements

- Volunteers are provided with the required documentation as listed above and provided with a verbal briefing prior to work beginning.
- It must be acknowledged in the animal ethics protocol application that volunteers are expected to be involved.
- Training and assessment records must be kept and maintained.



References and Resources

NHMRC. Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 (Section 4.4.3) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes> (accessed 22nd June 2020)

ANU. Procedure for Managing & Reporting Unexpected Adverse Events

<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-guidelines-and-forms> (accessed 22nd June 2020) ANU. AEEC 025_ ANU Field Work Volunteer Checklist

<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-guidelines-and-forms> (accessed 22nd June 2020)