ANIMAL ETHICS APPLICATION TIPS

**WILDLIFE**

# Top 10 tips

1. Write your application in plain English.
2. Ensure that the application clearly outlines the ‘lifetime’ experience of the animals in the protocol. The committee members need to be able to understand the various procedures/experiences that an animal will be exposed to and the frequency/duration/rest periods/transport etc. associated with that timeline. Attachments can help with this.
3. Justify your numbers – random number allocations or referring to ‘what has worked before’ is not sufficient and you need to be able to statistically justify the numbers you are requesting.
4. Be honest and clear in the impact assessment. Each procedure/event in the animal’s life will create some impact – spell this out and as the questions advance, clearly outline how you will minimise these impacts.
5. Detail the specific training those on the protocol have had, whether they are competent in the procedures to be undertaken.
6. Liaise with the vets and ethics team in advance of your application. They can provide advice on the application process and specific veterinary advice including anaesthetics/analgesics/dose rates etc.
7. Outline the monitoring for different stages of the animal’s lifetime. Provide specific score sheets for projects that may involve direct impact/pain or distress to the animals.
8. Ensure you have appropriate emergency procedures in place for work in the field. Options include the listing of a nearby veterinary clinic, rangers that are involved in the project etc.
9. Check the AEEC published standards and guidelines for advice on common procedures that may be undertaken. You can refer to these standards and do not need to repeat all the details in the application as long as you follow the standards as they are written.
10. Ask us! Contact the animal ethics team at [animal.ethics@anu.edu.au](mailto:animal.ethics@anu.edu.au) or vet services team at [vetservices.rsd@anu.edu.au](mailto:vetservices.rsd@anu.edu.au)

# Beginning your application

Here are two top tips when beginning a new application in ARIES:

* Enter and save your name under the Investigator tab, otherwise you will not be able to search for/find your application when you come back to ARIES after closing the application.
* **Do not open ARIES twice in the same internet browser** as it causes information to be inadvertently transferred between protocol records. If you wish to copy and paste from a previous protocol application in ARIES, make sure you open ARIES in two different internet browsers to do so (e.g. Firefox and Chrome), or copy the text from a PDF or Word version of the protocol.

Header page:

Ensure the proposed start date is after the meeting date. It can take a couple of weeks for approvals to be processed post meeting especially if the AEEC has post meeting questions/requests, therefore this should be factored in when choosing the start date.

Make sure that the number of months between the start and end dates on the Header page is equal to the number entered at 1.7 Main details tab. It is best to request the maximum duration of 3 years, as there is no penalty for finishing your project early but extensions are only possible for a maximum of 3 months with special conditions and only with good reason, subject to AEEC approval via submission of an amendment application. (See Main Details Tab note.)

If the protocol is replacing a previous protocol that is about to expire, please add this in under the text box heading “Any Other Comments” on the bottom of the page. Provide the expiring protocol’s number. This box can also be used to include information about licenceing eg if licence/permit application in process or any other information the AEEC needs to know but not covered by the other questions.

Please note the Ethics Office will allocate an Ethics number after the application has been submitted and will notify you of this.

# Completing your application

### Generating a copy of your application

Before you press the Submit button you can generate a PDF of your application by clicking the “Print Form” button on the Header page, then click the Magnifying glass icon, then click ‘1) Click this link to open your external document’ , then right click ‘Save Page As’ to save the PDF to the preferred location on your computer.

### Signatures

The PI, Nominee and all investigators must sign the application. The signatures must be submitted by the AEEC Meeting date your protocol is assigned to.   
When you create the pdf – there are two signature pages at the end.

The first page is for all investigators to sign confirming they have read the protocol and agree to procedures, their role and any amendments/conditions the AEEC may require.

The second page is the ACT licencing page for the PI to sign and a head and shoulders photo of the PI must be attached in the space provided.

Please email the signature pages as a pdf to the animal ethics team on [animal.ethics@anu.edu.au](mailto:animal.ethics@anu.edu.au).   
E-signatures (as long as they don’t lock the pdf) or scanned signatures are fine to use.

### Questions

If you have any questions or need assistance with the photo on the signature pages please contact the Animal Ethics Team at the RSD Ethics Office on [animal.ethics@anu.edu.au](mailto:animal.ethics@anu.edu.au).

## 1. THE PROGRAM

1.1 Introduction

This is not a question but an introduction to the AEEC process.

1.2 Lay description

The purpose of this question

To ensure that all members of the committee can understand a general description of the proposed research and why the research is being planned. The committee is made up of a mixture of individuals with different backgrounds, from vets and scientists to welfare nominees and lay people. It is important that all the members of the committee have a good understanding of the intention of your protocol, the type of research and the impact on the animals. Even though this question specifically asks for a lay description, keep this in mind throughout the entire application process and ensure that you define acronyms and complex ideas to assist the lay members of the committee.

Top Tips

* Keep this to the maximum 120 words.
* Ensure it is truly a lay description – aim your description to a year 10 high school student.
* A basic description of what your work is all about.

Common problems

Language is too scientific.

1.3 Objectives and Hypothesis

The purpose of this question

To allow the committee to review the scientific background of the application. This forms part of the harm/benefit analysis that is integral to the committee’s review of the application. (1.5, 1.15)

Top Tips

* It is essential to set out clear aims/objectives/hypothesis for your work
* You can include the science but some general description is great for the committee members without science qualifications
* Try not to use abbreviations or if you do – please provide a description of their meaning in the first use.

Common Problems

Clear objectives and hypothesis not provided.

1.4 Originality

The purpose of this question

To allow the committee to assess whether the project is justified they must be satisfied that this work isn’t repeating work already completed and is establishing new information or working towards an improvement in human or animal health. (1.6, 1.7)

Top Tips

* If this is a renewal of a previous protocol make it clear how your work has progressed to this protocol.
* If the work is the same it is important that you explain why it isn’t changing/progressing.
* The committee wants to know that you aren’t merely repeating work already done or being done elsewhere.
* If the work is novel and you are unsure of the outcome or impact on animals you may want to consider a pilot study. Any pilot study must be detailed in the ethics application as per the Code (2.3.14)

Common Problems

* Researchers only address the originality to their own previous work and not addressing its uniqueness compared to the broader field.
* The growth of a project between historically approved protocols is not clear and there is no argument for progression of research.

1.5 Alternatives

The purpose of this question

To allow you to address the “Replacement” and in some way the “Reduction” parts of the 3Rs (1.5-1.7)

Top Tips

* The committee is interested to know how much you have looked into alternatives.
* For wildlife work, alternatives can be particularly difficult to find however there may be previous studies that could be assessed to help refine your approach or you may find that the research question you are looking at has already been answered.
* Simply stating that this is the way it has always been done is not acceptable – you need to justify why this particular work must be done on animals and there are no alternatives.

Common Problems

No acknowledgement of alternative options can make it look like the researcher hasn’t looked into the options. For wildlife work you need to establish why the work must be done and that there are no alternatives that could achieve the same aims with less of an impact on the animals.

1.6.i What impact will the Program have on the welfare of the animals involved?

The purpose of this question

To ensure that you have considered the risks that exist when performing your research with animals. This must be specific to your research. Welfare impacts include pain and distress, change in provision of food and water that may cause stress, restriction from normal behaviour, changes in environment and any discomfort that may be caused during the course of the project. (1.8-1.14)

Top Tips

* For each of the procedures undertaken the impact on the animals must be detailed in regards to their welfare impact.
* Where animals are subject to multiple procedures, the cumulative impact on the animals needs to be explained.
* If a number of procedures are performed on a single animal it may be useful to provide a timeline of events the animal is exposed to which allows the committee to consider the cumulative impact on the animal.

Common Problems

* Don’t list the methods to minimise the impact here – this is what the next question is for.
* If your approach is novel and you are not sure of the potential impacts, then you need to outline this fact and if the impact is unknown, this should be clearly stated.

1.6.ii What will you do to minimise the impact on the welfare of the animals involved?

The purpose of this question

To allow you to address the “Refinement” part of the 3Rs. This answer should flow on from the risks/impact that you outlined in 1.6i and should address each of the potential impacts you have highlighted. (1.10-1.14)

Top Tips

* This allows for a description of the “Refinement” that will be undertaken.
* Include improvements that you have made to your procedures in the past, how you have investigated the most suitable trapping/handling methods etc. Include training that the staff/students/volunteers will undertake to minimise their impact on the animals.
* Seek advice from the Vet Services Team where you may want ideas on the best techniques.
* You should aim to address all of the impacts you identified above and how these will be minimised
* Ensure that any changes you have implemented in previous protocols that have improved the welfare of the animals is detailed in this section. This may include outcomes of UAE investigations or your own applied improvements.

Common Problems

* Researchers use this question to justify the impact. That should be left for the next question.
* Researchers don’t outline what improvements/research they have undertaken to ensure they are following best practice.

1.6.iii What considerations justify the impact the Program will have on the animals?

The purpose of this question

This is one of the most important aspects of your protocol. This allows the committee to perform a cost/benefit analysis of the impact of your work and your stated potential benefits of the research (including the objectives and novelty of the work.)

You should use this opportunity to clearly state the expected benefits to the species, humans, teaching, environment or knowledge. (1.5-1.7)

Top Tips

The higher the potential impact on the animals, the greater the benefit must be demonstrated.

Common Problems

The impact and mitigation steps are often repeated rather than justifying the benefit of the work over the impact to the animal.

1.7 Estimated Duration

The purpose of this question

To determine how long you intend to undertake this protocol. (1.30)

Top Tips

* Ensure that you enter the duration of the protocol in months not years (i.e. 36 months)
* Protocols can only be approved for a maximum of 3 years.
* It is helpful if you detail somewhere in your application what funding is secured for the protocol and how long it is intended to last. *(2.3.16)*
* If you don’t need to start the program immediately you can request a deferred start date.

1.8 Program Personnel

The purpose of this question

To detail the people who will be working on the protocol, their level of responsibility and their experience. (1.29, 1.31)

Top Tips

* Ensure a person is allocated the role of nominee. This person will be the back-up contact for the protocol should the PI be unavailable and should therefore have a good understanding of the project (e.g. nominee may be a supervisor, colleague, senior research student or lab manager).
* For student projects – Honours/Masters students should be an investigator and it would be preferable that a colleague is a nominee, and the supervisor be the PI, but if PhD student they can currently be either the PI or nominee.
* If students are listed on protocol please indicate the student type ie. PhD, Masters, Honours etc.
* Ensure you detail all the following information for each person:
  + Their general experience with the species/type of program
  + Their specific experience with each procedure to be undertaken under the protocol or clearly define where they will not be responsible for undertaking a procedure
  + The year they last completed the compulsory animal ethics training (this requires a refresher every 5 years). If they are not up to date or have not yet completed this training you must list the date by which they will complete training.
* Where individuals are not yet trained on a procedure this should be clearly outlined with detail on the proposed training for them to meet competency for the required procedures.

Common Issues

* Primary investigators and Nominees must be ANU personnel.
* Lack of information provided on specific training, in particular the advanced techniques referred to in the protocol.

2. Classification of the Program

The purpose of this question

The answers to this question address the regulatory and reporting requirements for the University. It also allows an assessment of the degree of impact the work undertaken will have. (1.10-1.14)

Top Tips

Ensure you consider each classification carefully.

* A minor operative procedure (also referred to as minor surgical procedure) is a surgery that does not penetrate or expose a body cavity or permanently impair physical or physiological functions (e.g. subcutaneous implants, skin biopsy)
* Surgery with recovery is surgery that penetrates and exposes a body cavity or a procedure that permanently impairs physical or physiological functions (this includes craniotomy, laparotomy etc.)
* Death as an endpoint is generally not approved. This is not where animals die unexpectedly but where you intend to let animals die without humane intervention at an agreed endpoint.

Common Issues

* Not indicating the accurate classifications.
* Underestimating the type of challenge/degree of impact on the animal.

3.1 Animal Species

The purpose of this question

This section allows you to assign your animals into specific groups. You are required to provide the expected number of animals to be utilised for your protocol. (1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.21)

Top Tips

* ARIES is limited in how it can assign ‘groups’ and often the procedures for groups need to be repeated if you list each strain/species as a separate group. Consider using your ‘experiments’ to define groups.
* If the numbers are unknown as it is a monitoring/observation only study or survey, then the requested number of animals can be zero.
* However, the number of animals involved, including bycatch, must be recorded and reported to the AEEC in the annual reports and annual animal usage numbers.

**Common Issues**

None.

3.2 General Explanation (of numbers)

The purpose of this question

You must provide details on how the total number of animals was determined. This should include the statistical justification for the numbers requested and the number of animals used per experiment. (1.15, 1.16, 1.21-1.27)

Top Tips

* Even in wildlife work you need to be able to statistically justify the number of animals you will be working with. It is strongly recommended that you seek advice from the ANU [Statistical Consulting Unit](https://services.anu.edu.au/business-units/dean-higher-degree-research/statistical-consulting-unit) for determination of appropriate statistical methods for your research and that your advice from the SCU is referenced in this answer.
* Do not state the animal group numbers are ‘based on previous experience’ – this does not justify the numbers sufficiently.
* Do not try to underestimate down to the lowest possible numbers per experiment – the committee would rather more animals are utilised for good quality data and outcomes, than too few animals with no appropriate analysis able to be completed.
* Ensure the dates are the same as per the Header page.
* Where you have a number of experiments it is useful for the committee to receive a table explaining the numbers to be used. Unfortunately, ARIES does not accept the use of tables in the fields, but this can be attached in the Documents tab for the committee’s assessment.

Common Issues

* Lack of description of statistical design.
* Very large numbers of animals requested without any clear justification/reasoning that make sense to the non-scientific members of the committee.

3.3 Location of animals during the Program

The purpose of this question

Provide geographical locations of your study area. Any requirement to house the animals must be detailed with who will be caring for the animals, stocking density, cleaning regimes etc. (3.2)

Top Tips

* If there is a detailed husbandry manual, provide this as an attachment to the protocol.
* Where transfer of animals is required it is handy if you include references to acclimatisation periods here or in the procedural section. You can refer to the ANU Acclimatisation Guidelines at <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-procedures-and-guidelines> for advice on appropriate periods.
* For Wildlife projects the location must still be indicated even if animals are not being housed or captured. In this case the location details may include zoos, national/state parks or private properties (please indicate details such as region or shire, or GPS co-ordinates if specific locations are known).
* Make sure any licences/permits are listed and are attached via the Documents tab. (If licence/permit application is in progress or to be made after animal ethics approval, please note details in the ‘other comments’ section.)
* Ensure the state is listed (If Jervis Bay Territory please note Federal)

Common Issues

* Copy and paste from old protocols is used without updating relevant information from the day to day management of animals.

4.1 Procedures carried out if animals are not trapped or restrained.

The purpose of this question

To allow the committee to assess procedures undertaken that do not include the direct handling of animals (e.g. camera traps, feeding surveys etc.) The information must allow for the procedures to be assessed based on the species, the environment, the purpose and the potential impact on the animals. (3.3)

Top Tips

* If ANU Central Guidelines or Standards are available, it is useful to refer to these (<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-guidelines-and-forms>).
* If you need to adjust how something is performed compared with these AEEC approved guidelines, then this must be made clear in your protocol application.
* Include the age and sex of the animal for each procedure.
* If multiple procedures are being undertaken, then a timeline of events for each animal can be useful for the committee to assess the potential cumulative impact on the individual.

Common Issues

* Vague responses without provided details on the steps within a procedure.
* Lack of detail that requires the committee to make assumptions on how a procedure is undertaken or leads to many further questions being asked in the Q&A process.
* Procedures not updated from previous protocols when improvements may have been made by the group or under veterinary advice, or best practice standards have changed (e.g. anaesthesia drug doses, methodology).
  1. Procedures to detail when trapping and restraint are involved

1. If animals are trapped explain why this is necessary

Explain the justification for trapping the animals and why/how this added stress event will contribute to the research outcomes.

1. Types of traps used

Be specific. Provide photos of the types of traps, especially if they are made specifically for your project. Add details on how the traps may be designed for the specific species and how they may reduce by-catch. Include detail on any protection the traps may have e.g. lining to protect from hypothermia, external covering to stop water ingress etc.

1. How many traps will be set and over what period of time?

This is crucial information to allow the committee to assess if you have planned the trapping events appropriately. Include how many people will be checking the traps and this should make sense over the period of time and be feasible.

1. What is the safest time to trap and release these animals?

This will vary depending on the species and the time of year. Ensure you take into consideration weather extremes, breeding events, predator presence etc. Be specific with restrictions you may impose (e.g. maximum/minimum temperatures etc).

1. How often will traps be checked &/or cleared?

The committee expects that traps are checked very regularly. This should be specific to the species, type of trap and the environmental conditions.

1. What samples are to be taken and how will these be taken?

Be specific about samples, the reason for them, and the methodology. Attach specific procedures if you have them. Say whether any antiseptic or other substance will be applied after the sample is taken to reduce infection/pain/discomfort.

The committee is not favourable towards toe clipping and will ask you to demonstrate that you have satisfactorily investigated alternative methods and ruled them out for your protocol before beginning to consider toe clipping.

Include detail on how sample equipment will be sterilised/cleaned between animals, what training individuals will have to undertake, pain relief, location, risk to the animal.

1. How will animals be restrained? (outline anaesthetic procedures if applicable)

Be as detailed as possible in this answer. If animals are housed in a bag for a period of time, or a transport container, include details on how the container is decontaminated between animals to limit the spread of disease.

Include details on who will do the restraint and what training/competency they have with the species to be targeted.

Detail how long animals will need to be restrained for.

If anaesthetics are to be used, it is recommended you seek veterinary input into the appropriate drug and dose rates.

1. Is transportation necessary and if so what method and precautions will be used?

For transportation by road, include backup systems that you may have in place in case of car troubles or ill individuals.

Ensure that there is appropriate temperature regulation along the journey and detail what will happen if a stop is required during the journey.

Provide details on whether the vehicle to be used is a privately owned vehicle, how many people will accompany the animal(s) etc.

1. How will animals be individually identified?

Methods used to identify animals may be disruptive, especially for wildlife. Include what investigation you have undertaken to ensure the impact you cause is the minimal possible. Detail why individual identification is necessary and how it will be undertaken. Include a procedure if this is available and how staff/researchers are trained and marked competent in the identification procedure.

1. Will any radio tracking devices be used and if so, how will they be retrieved?

Provide detail on the size and weight of the tracking device in relation to the target species. It can be helpful to attach pictures of what they look like. Provide details on whether you have considered the potential growth/weight loss/reproductive status of the animal.

If you have used the same/similar tracking devices in the past, detail any potential complications and how these will be minimised/managed if they occur.

If the application is new, consider a pilot study perhaps in a captive environment, where feasible, to ensure there is minimal risk of snagging/complication.

Detail if the tracking device has a ‘weak link’ and if not, detail as to why there is no weak link.

1. If tracking devices are used how will they be retrieved?

As per the above question detail any other devices and how they may be tracked and removed to ensure there isn’t long term consequences to the animal. If a tracking device ceases to be operational, what options are there to try to locate the animal and remove the device?

1. Please identify any emergencies that may arise and procedures to deal with those emergencies

The Committee is particularly interested in emergencies that may arise as a direct result of the research protocol.

The ANU expects wildlife researchers in the field to have options to deal with animal welfare emergencies. A veterinary coverage plan, that covers suitable treatment of animals that may be directly impacted as a result of the research activities, must be included in an approved wildlife animal ethics protocol. Such plans should consider the availability of a veterinarian, the competency and knowledge of the field workers, the likelihood of adverse events and how they may impact animal welfare. The plan must include who may be involved in performing euthanasia should this be necessary, their training and a communication plan surrounding this requirement. In all situations, where an injured or ill animal is identified, then veterinary advice must be sought immediately. Any variations to these requirements must be clearly identified in an approved animal ethics protocol.

Protocols that are remote may incorporate the need to train individuals undertaking fieldwork in at least one humane method of euthanasia as outlined in this protocol.

Protocols that are within reasonable distance of a veterinary clinic may nominate to make a written agreement with a veterinary clinic and submit this agreement with their application. The ANU veterinarian must also be kept up to date with any events and treatment or actions undertaken and are also available for advice and discussion where required.

For protocols without a written agreement, the ANU vets must be contacted as soon as possible in the event of any animal welfare emergency and an action plan will be determined based on location and availability of resources. In some situations, physical support from the ANU vet may not be suitable and advice may be provided to attend a local veterinary clinic for assessment, diagnosis and potential euthanasia.

The Committee understands that not all emergency situations can be predicted, in particular those that may not relate directly to the research protocol. The Committee expects that common sense applies to relieving pain and distress in animals where possible. Options to follow up on finding animals in pain or distress may include contacting local wildlife groups such as Wires (NSW), ACT Wildlife (ACT) or Wildcare (Queanbeyan region).

* 1. Substances not including anaesthetics and neuromuscular blocking agents

**The purpose of this question**

To ensure all compounds being provided to animals are listed in the protocol. *(3.3.8-3.3.15)*

**Top Tips**

* Ensure your drug doses are accurate and within best practice guidelines.
* Consult with the ANU Veterinary Services team where you are unsure on appropriate drugs or doses.
* Where novel compounds are being utilised ensure there is sufficient information provided for the committee to assess the compound in terms of risk. In particular where Non-Pharmaceutical Grade Compounds (NPGCs) are being utilised ensure you address the specific factors as listed in the relevant ANU documents (<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-guidelines-and-forms>)

4.4 Anaesthetic agents used

The purpose of this question

To ensure all compounds being provided to animals are listed in the protocol and that drug doses are accurate and suitable for the procedures being undertaken. (3.3.8-3.3.15)

Top Tips

* Double check your dose rates and seek veterinary advice where you are unsure or if you are undertaking a new anaesthesia combination.
* Include the % of any inhalational anaesthetics and the flow rate for oxygen/gas to be provided simultaneously.
* Separate the doses for induction and maintenance.
* Refer to or attach a specific procedure where relevant.

Common Issues

* Lack of information and detail provided.
* Poorly written dose rates that do not adequately explain the anaesthetic procedure.

4.5 Neuromuscular blocking agents used

The purpose of this question

To ensure all compounds are listed. In particular, neuromuscular blocking agents come with unique risks of animals being restrained whilst still conscious and able to feel distress/pain therefore they are considered separately. (3.3.14)

Top Tips

Ensure the use of such agents is well justified in the protocol.

****Common Issues****

None reported to date, as these agents are rarely used.

4.6 Extent and method of supervision of animals during experimentation, including methods to be used for assessing and preventing pain and distress: This should include method and frequency of monitoring animals before, during and after procedures and should also detail what will be done if a problem is identified.

The purpose of this question

To detail the monitoring that will occur during the experimental period, before experiments begin to assess suitability and after experiments (this may be during a procedure, across many days/weeks or for the life of the animal where appropriate). (3.1.20-3.1.25)

Top Tips

* Utilise the ANU central standard approved Monitoring Score Cards where appropriate for rodents (<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-guidelines-and-forms>)
* Seek advice from the ANU Veterinary Services Team if your protocol has the potential for moderate to severe impact on animals.
* For surgical procedures or during the use of anaesthetics ensure the frequency of assessment of the depth of anaesthesia and welfare of the animal is noted. A specific score sheet during anaesthesia may be of benefit. The ANU Veterinary Services Team can provide templates for these and they are available on the ethics website.
* It is useful to define who will be responsible for the monitoring and when (e.g. research group on day of procedure and animal care staff thereafter etc.)
* For field work this may include the monitoring of animals post capture and release (where feasible) to assess any impact. If post release monitoring isn’t feasible this should be clearly stated and detail any adjunctive measures that may be used (e.g. camera traps a week later etc.)

Common Issues

Poorly designed score cards that do not have clear intervention points or humane end-points detailed.

4.7 Following surgery, arrangements made by the investigators for immediate and continuing post-operative and/or post-procedural care, including details of restraint, housing and analgesics to be used.

The purpose of this question

To allow the committee to review the manner in which the risks to the animal will be monitored after they have been exposed to any procedure or change in conditions. (3.3.17-3.3.20)

Top Tips

* Ensure there are monitoring score cards in place.
* List the options for pain relief or actions to be taken if animals show a slow recovery or ongoing pain or distress.

Common Issues

* Lack of consideration of animals at the end of survival procedures including suitable pain relief options and monitoring requirements.
* Monitoring of animals left to animal care staff who may not understand or know what procedure the animals have experienced and the relevant risks and actions.

4.8 Provide details of the planned end-point for individual animals in the experiment and reasons for its choice. Are any animals to be used again and if so why?

The purpose of this question

To detail the end of experiment and allow the committee to assess any repeat experiments and therefore the ‘life impact’ on the individual animals under the protocol. (2.7.4 v, 3.1.26-3.1.28)

Top Tips

* If animals are to be re-used this requires specific outlining and justification in the protocol.
* A timeline of the ‘life story’ of individual animals can be helpful for the committee to understand the cumulative impact on the animal. This can be attached as a separate document. Where multiple trapping events are likely throughout an animal’s life, this should be detailed and the frequency provided. If the intention is to avoid multiple trapping/handling of the same animal, methods to avoid re-capture on the same/subsequent trapping events should be detailed.
* If animals are released back to their natural habitat ensure that the risks of territory changes, fighting, predator and environmental conditions are all detailed and methods to mitigate these risks are listed.

Common Issues

Re-use impact is underestimated by the research group.

4.9 If to be held at the University please detail length and justification for holding for this length of time.

The purpose of this question

To assess the requirement for holding animals that may not be under ‘active experimentation’ or require prolonged holding for experimental reasons.

Top Tips

* Animals are not to be held for prolonged periods without justification. Animals should be ordered/held for a specific reason. This should be outlined in the protocol.
* Rodents that are maintained past 12 months of age must have specific justification on the ethics protocol.
* If animals can’t be released back into the wild, the reason for this must be clearly detailed and the planned caring arrangements provided.

Common Issues

Researchers don’t understand the welfare implications of maintaining aged animals or holding animals beyond the planned endpoint.

4.10.1 If animals are to be killed, what method is to be used?

The purpose of this question

To determine the method that animals will be killed and allow this to be assessed by the committee. (3.3.45)

Top Tips

* If there are a few different methods, it is important to identify which method will be used in which situation.
* If using overdose of anaesthetic, it is necessary to undertake a secondary method of killing afterwards.
* Some young animals require special consideration so take this into account.
* Where animals in the field are to be intentionally killed for specimens or pest species management, the person undertaking the procedure must be able to demonstrate competency in the techniques to be used. The techniques should be detailed. The Field Euthanasia Guidelines can provide some advice on acceptable methods of humane killing for wildlife.

Common Issues

Procedures for some methods may be out of date – refresh knowledge by referring to the central SOPs at <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/animal-ethics-policies-procedures-and-guidelines>.

4.10.2 If animals not killed, what happens to them?

The purpose of this question

To determine the outcome of any animals not killed at the end of the experiment or the expiry of the protocol. This is often an important question for wildlife studies in particular. (3.4)

Top Tips

* Provide detail on the ongoing care and welfare management of any animals that are not killed.
* For all species that are held in captivity consider rehoming options (this would require consultation with the AEEC and University).

Common Issues

This may not have been considered.

5 Are there any health risks to other animals or staff? If so, explain the nature of the risk and precautions to be taken.

The purpose of this question

To ensure that risks to staff and researchers, including animal care staff, veterinarians and other members of staff, are aware of the risks of the project and that adequate risk assessment has taken place. It is part of the responsibilities under the code to highlight work health and safety risks (2.1.8 vii)

Top Tips

* Consider all chemicals used in experiments, potential exposure to research and animal care staff.
* If using isoflurane consider the risk of exposure to Waste Anaesthetic Gases.
* Complete a risk assessment for all work to be undertaken.

Common Issues

Underestimating or underreporting of risks.

6 Is it the intention of the investigator that the findings of the program be published in their entirety?

The purpose of this question

To ensure that the intention is that information gained as part of the work being undertaken is published and the use of the animals is not wastage.

To allow the committee to review the intention of the research group to publish all findings, whether negative or positive. (Best practice methodology, 1.15-1.17)

Top Tips

Outline what you will do if your results do not support your hypothesis – will you publish negative findings?

Common Issues

Lack of detail and consideration for the intention of the question.

7 Any other comments

The purpose of this question

To allow research groups to add in other relevant information that may not form the answer to any of the above questions.

Top Tips

This can be used to convey any information that you haven’t had the opportunity to include in the rest of the protocol that you think is relevant for the committee consideration.

Common Issues

None.