

***Policy for Inclusion of Veterinary Technicians (VTs)
in Invasive Animal Use Protocols***

***Approved: October 11, 2012
Supersedes: September 8, 2010***

Rationale

Animal health and welfare issues that arise at Western have frequently been associated with a lack of appropriate training and expertise of research staff. In situations where Veterinary Technicians (VTs) are on staff this type of situation occurs far less frequently and resolution is simplified due to the level of understanding of the issues and the ability to implement changes.

VTs undergo extensive theoretical and clinical training during a two or three year program. This training enables them to function as surgical assistants, perform treatments and assess animal health and welfare. This level of knowledge and expertise cannot reasonably be expected to be obtained 'on the job' or during the ACVS teaching program sessions.

In order for Western to ensure that research animals obtain optimum care, the mandatory inclusion of VTs on projects associated with AUS-approved *Animal Use Protocols (AUPs)* shall be as outlined below.

Criteria

Appropriately trained and experienced VTs (either hired as research staff or rented for a fee from an AUS-approved source) must be directly employed to provide technical support for any of the following AUP elements:

- 'D' or 'E' level surgical procedures on NHPs
- 'E' level surgical procedures on dogs, cats, pigs, sheep.
- 'D' level surgical procedures on dogs, cats, pigs, sheep that involve any of the following:
 - Long and/or invasive surgical procedures;
 - Surgical and/or other procedures with the possibility of causing severe deficits;
 - Prolonged anaesthetic times;
 - Long and/or difficult recoveries;
 - Multiple surgical procedures;
 - Multiple anaesthetics
- Any AUP where there have been consistent recurring issues of relating to animal health and welfare.
- Other species may be added to this list as necessary based on AUP approval.
- Other categories of invasiveness may be added to this list as necessary based on AUP approval.

Since the relative impact of the above interventions may have significantly varied impacts on animal health and welfare, the AUS will assess each AUP in this group on a case by case basis.

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Veterinary Technician Responsibilities & Accountabilities

A Veterinary Technician must:

- Have an advisory role in issues relating to animal health and welfare
- Be involved in
 - Anaesthetic induction and surgical preparation,
 - All surgical procedures,
 - All anaesthetic recoveries.

Exemptions

Principal Investigators wishing to receive AUS approval for an exemption to this requirement may formally submit an exemption request directly to the AUS via the AUS office (auspc@uwo.ca). In consultation with an ACVS veterinarian, the AUS will consider exemption requests on a case-by-case basis.

Criteria for Exemptions - Exemption requests will be considered where individuals tasked with responsibilities as described within this policy have demonstrated competency defined as:

- technical capabilities as required by the AUP;
- adequate experience with these skills and species;
- knowledge of the humane care and use of animals in a research setting;
- consistent adherence to humane principles irrespective of potential conflicts imposed by their non-arms-length accountabilities.

Exemption Request Process – The exemption request process will be as follows:

Principal Investigators will:

- complete the appended form entitled, “*Request for Exemption from the Policy for Inclusion of Veterinary Technicians (VTs) in Invasive Animal Use Protocols*”
- submit the exemption request form to the AUS via auspc@uwo.ca at minimum two months prior to the anticipated need

The AUS will:

- review the exemption form in conjunction with an ACVS veterinarian or other arms-length expert
- present and consider approval of the exemption request
- communicate their decision via the AUS administrative office
 - If approved, a Certificate of Competency will be forwarded for the individual
 - This certificate will be appended to the related AUPs and filed with the individual’s training records

***Policy for Inclusion of Veterinary Technicians (VTs)
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Exemption Request Form***

***Approved September 8, 2010
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Please complete and submit this *Exemption Request Form* to the Animal Use Subcommittee via the AUS Office (auspc@uwo.ca) at minimum two months in advance of need. Following receipt of this form, the AUS will consider this exemption at an upcoming AUS full meeting. If approved, a certificate of competency will be forwarded to the Principal Investigator, and filed under the approved individual's training records.

Please note that AUS approval of this requested exemption is mandatory in advance of related animal use.

1. **Date of Request:**
2. **PI Full Name & Contact Information:**
 - 2.1. Name -
 - 2.2. Email -
 - 2.3. Contact Number -
3. **AUP #: & Species Involved:**
4. **Requested Alternate to a Veterinary Technician:** Please provide the full name and contact information of the alternate requested to assume responsibilities and accountabilities as outlined within the *Policy for Inclusion of Veterinary Technicians in Invasive Animal Use Protocols*:
 - 4.1. Full Name -
 - 4.2. Email -
 - 4.3. Contact Number -
5. **Required Technical Responsibilities & Duties:** Please provide an outline of technical responsibilities and duties requested to be undertaken by this individual as per the AUP:
6. **Exemption Criteria:** Please provide details specific to this requested alternate regarding his/her:
 - 6.1. Technical capabilities –
 - 6.2. Experience with required skills
 - 6.3. Experience with related species
 - 6.4. Knowledge of humane care and use of animals in a research setting
 - 6.5. Consistent adherence to humane principles