

## AAVMC Policy

### *Use of Animals in Education*

The AAVMC recognizes the important role animals play in the education of veterinarians whether in their initial professional training, subsequent advanced study for a clinical specialty and/or a graduate degree, and “wet labs” offered by continuing education programs. Animals likewise play a necessary role in the training of veterinary technicians and non-veterinarian graduate students.

The AAVMC further recognizes that not all educational objectives can be met through the use of client-owned animals, thus it is necessary that some live animals be obtained by purchase or donation and used for instructional activities that may be terminal in nature. That said, the AAVMC emphasizes that such use must be at the minimum level necessary to meet the educational objectives, i.e., the skills being taught using live animals should be critical to the training program, and only when no reasonable alternatives to live animal use exist. Some schools keep colonies of animals for less invasive training such as mares or cows used for palpation training. Their welfare, environmental enrichment, and humane disposition should be carefully considered. Finally, it is imperative that all animal use is reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and that the principle of the “3 Rs”<sup>1</sup> is scrupulously followed. In the case of instruction in the veterinary curriculum, this would involve:

(1) **Refinement** of teaching methods to eliminate or reduce pain and distress whenever live animals must be used. *Examples:* Student surgical laboratory exercises likely to have relatively painful outcomes even with the use of analgesia, such as orthopedic procedures, should be done as non-recovery procedures. Aggressive use should be made of analgesics for less painful procedures where recovery is allowed, such as spays and neuters. It is crucial that students are educated from the onset as to the need for careful monitoring, pain management and compassionate care during the procedures and following recovery, and that adequate supervision is provided to insure the quality of care.

(2) **Reduction** in the number of live animals used in teaching. *Examples:* Student surgical laboratory exercises that use live animals should be scheduled in such a way that several procedures can be done during a single terminal surgical session.

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<sup>1</sup> The “3 Rs” refer to a study published in 1959 (William Russell and Rex Burch, *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*, 1959). At the annual meeting of the former American Association of Laboratory Animal Science in Washington, D.C., the late Major Charles W. Hume, the founder of the Universities Federation of Animal Welfare (UFAW), presented a study by two English scientists, William Russell, described as a brilliant zoologist, psychologist and classics scholar, and Rex Burch, a microbiologist. They had carried out a systematic study of the ethical aspects and “the development and progress of humane techniques in the laboratory.”

(3) **Replacement** of live animals with client-owned, cadaver, less sentient and/or non-animal instructional methods wherever feasible. *Examples:* Demonstrations/laboratory exercises that use live animals in terminal or potentially painful/distressful procedures could be videotaped once, with subsequent screening of the videos replacing the live animal exercises in the following years. Students can gain hands-on surgical experience in high volume by participating in mass spay/neuter clinics for animal shelters and feral cat programs, and the animals, not just the trainees, benefit from the training program. Crisis management in anesthesia and critical care can be taught very effectively to veterinary students using modified or unmodified human patient simulators.

Although it is traditional to speak of the “3 Rs,” the AAVMC recommends that students are taught to follow a 4th “R” as well:

(4) **Respect** the animal for the value of its life. Respect the animal for its contribution to science and medicine. Respect the animal for the privilege of learning from hands on manipulation of a living, breathing animal. Respect the animal that has been euthanized and make sure its body is handled and disposed of properly.