

AAVMC Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Veterinary Education

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TASK FORCE ON THE USE OF ANIMALS IN VETERINARY EDUCATION

- Julie A. Hunt, Chair; Lincoln Memorial University
- Sarah Baillie, University of Bristol
- Bonnie V. Beaver, Texas A&M University
- Anne Marie J. Carey, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island
- Julie A. Cary, Washington State University
- Jeremy Delcambre, Louisiana State University
- Derek M. Foster, North Carolina State University
- Dean A. Hendrickson, Colorado State University
- Jon N. Huxley, Massey University
- Ted Y. Mashima, American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

BACKGROUND

The AAVMC Board of Directors established the Task Force on the Use of Animals in Veterinary Education, in July 2021, with the charge of developing recommendations to the Board. The Task Force recommended the development of guidelines for AAVMC member institutions. The draft was distributed to the AAVMC Assembly and AAVMC Academic Affairs Committee, in August 2022, with request to distribute to the key faculty/staff members for review and comment. The AAVMC Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Veterinary Education were approved by the Board in October 2022.

SUGGESTED CITATION

AAVMC Task Force on the Use of Animals in Veterinary Education, Hunt, J.A., Baillie, S., Beaver, B.V., Carey, A.M.J., Cary, J.A., Delcambre, J., Foster, D.M., Hendrickson, D.A., Huxley, J.N., Mashima, T.Y. (2022) Guidelines for the Use of Animals in Veterinary Education. Washington, DC: American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges.

AAVMC GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS IN VETERINARY EDUCATION

Animal use within veterinary education should provide professional level opportunities for students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary to prevent, control, diagnose, and treat medical, surgical, and behavioral conditions in animals in a way that is humane, respectful, and welfare appropriate for all animals used in the educational process.

Animal use should be guided by 4 Rs (replacement, reduction, refinement, and respect) and must be compliant with applicable laws and regulations. Veterinary institutions should critically evaluate all animal use to determine if it is necessary to achieve educational outcomes. Institutions should explore and implement alternatives where appropriate to minimize animal use while maintaining student competence.

Institutions should establish a formal policy for the critical evaluation of animal source and use as part of the educational mission. Institutions should demonstrate transparency by reviewing, presenting, and discussing information about the source and use of all animals, cadaver and live, with students, faculty, and staff at least annually.

CADAVER ACQUISITION AND USE

Institutions using cadavers in teaching should:

1. Implement respectful methods of cadaver acquisition, use, and final disposition appropriate to local context and culture.
2. Implement a policy for auditing and evaluating cadaver use; implementing replacement, reduction, and refinement of use where appropriate and possible; and reporting to the institution's senior veterinary administration at least annually.
 - A. Alternative instructional models and technology should be considered where effective to meet learning objectives.
 - B. Cadavers should be used strategically, purposefully, and to the fullest extent possible.
3. Responsibly and ethically source their cadavers, when cadaver use is necessary in the veterinary curriculum.
 - A. Whenever possible, animals should not be euthanized solely for educational purposes; cadavers used in teaching should be sourced from animals that have died or are euthanized at or nearing the end of their natural and/or productive life.

- B. Willed body donation programs, in which the donation is accompanied by owner consent, can serve as an ethical source of cadavers.
- C. If necessary, cadavers or live animals may be purchased. Institutions should work towards establishing auditing processes to ensure transparency in ethical sourcing.

LIVE ANIMALS

Institutions using live animals in teaching should:

1. Implement a policy for reviewing the use of animals in education; identifying alternatives to animal use where appropriate; evaluating the pedagogical merit of animal use both for teaching and assessment of skills critical to meeting the learner's career goals; and reporting to the institution's senior veterinary administration at least annually.
2. Teach tasks and procedures using a clinical skills model or simulation whenever one is available and effective to complement or precede live animal practice, depending on pedagogical circumstance.
 - A. Models may include low-fidelity task trainers or models that do not resemble a live animal or may be high-fidelity manikins that realistically portray procedures.
 - B. Institutions should develop and evolve a long-term strategy for the increased integration of models into teaching and assessment.
3. Implement a policy for the use of internally owned (i.e., by student, staff, faculty) or client-owned companion animals to reduce the need for on-site colonies for non-invasive skills development. A similar policy should be considered for other species.
4. Implement a policy for the ethical use of externally owned animals (e.g., shelter animals, client-owned animals, animals on farms) for invasive skills development. Proactively work toward reducing invasive procedures to those that have the potential to benefit the health and welfare of the animal.
5. Implement policies that emphasize the safety and welfare of the animal and student throughout the performance of all skills and procedures.
6. Optimally utilize clinical cases to achieve clinical competency. There is no recommendation to reduce caseloads in the clinical setting.