

Universidad De Puerto Rico En Arecibo
IACUC
Animal care and use complaint protocol

Actual or perceived mistreatment of an animal may be physical or psychological. Actual mistreatment is best thought of as any noncompliance with the regulations of any regulatory agency with jurisdiction over animal care or noncompliance with policies or procedures approved by UPRA IACUC. Perceived mistreatment arises when someone feels that an animal is being misused or abused or that a particular protocol is detrimental to the health or welfare of an animal or person associated with animal care.

In the event of any concern or complaint concerning animal care or use at UPRA, the IACUC has a definite role.

1. If the complaint concerns noncompliance with an approved protocol, the IACUC must investigate and remedy the situation and, if necessary, impose sanctions.
2. If the complaint concerns animal use that has been approved by the IACUC the response may be, (1) no action after a review of the protocol, (2) revision of the protocol, or (3) education of the complainant.
3. Any complaint must be directed to the Chairperson of the IACUC by whoever receives the complaint initially.

Any and all communications concerning the misuse of animals should be taken seriously.

Complaints

Anyone may make a complaint, both university employees and the public. The complainant will be protected against recrimination.

1. The identity of the complainant will be kept confidential, and he or she must be made aware of this protection.
2. The formal complaint must be made in writing to all members of the IACUC. The chairperson may talk with the complainant prior to receipt of the formal complaint.
3. A typewritten copy of the complaint with the identification of the complainant deleted will be given to the persons named if the IACUC deems the complaint valid.
4. In the event that the complaint is against the Chairperson of the IACUC, or if the Chairperson has a special association with the complainant or the person against whom the complaint has been filed, the Chair will not act. Instead, the Vice President for Research and Development will initiate action on the complaint.
5. The Chair may review the complaint and, if warranted, initiate an investigation and/or suggest a sanction.
6. The Chair must inform the members of the IACUC within 24 hours of the complaint and the actions he or she has taken.
 - a. If the Chairperson deems the complaint invalid or not worthy of investigation, the IACUC may overturn this action of the Chair by a majority vote of all members.
 - b. The Chair may not vote on a motion to overturn his/her decision.
 - c. If the Chair or the Attending Veterinarian deems that the non-compliance severe enough to warrant a suspension of the activity, the IACUC must meet within 24 hours to review the suspension and determine the final sanction.

- d. The members of the IACUC may request an investigation or a modification of any action taken by the Chair.

Sanctions

No sanction may be imposed without a hearing by the full IACUC. In the event a sanction is imposed, the person receiving the sanction must be notified by mail and given a chance for appeal. The Institutional Officer (IO) in consultation with the IACUC shall review the reasons for suspension and take appropriate corrective action.

Sanctions may include the following:

1. Suspension of the activity
2. Temporary suspension until the infraction is corrected;
3. Permanent suspension if the violation is major and/or the investigator does not make correction
4. Denial of access to the facility by a particular individual(s) who has/have been responsible for the infraction. If the individual(s) is denied access, the IACUC may approve of another individual to complete the work. If expenses are involved, there may be a charge for services rendered
5. A written reprimand to be placed in the individual's personnel file
6. A written warning or reprimand given to the individual(s)

The Institutional Officer (IO) will be notified of the action. The IO may increase the severity of the sanction, but may not reduce it.

In an extreme situation, the University President may be notified of the sanction and may increase the severity of the action, but may not reduce it.

Records

At the end of the action on the complaint, a report must be entered into the minutes of the next meeting. This report should include records of votes and a minority report if there was a non-unanimous vote. Since these are public records, the name of the complainant will not be used.

1. All records of the complaint and investigation will be kept for a period of 10 years after the complaint is filed.
2. Records other than the minutes of public meetings will remain sealed and available only via a court order or at the request of a government regulatory agency with jurisdiction over the IACUC.

The IACUC may seek legal or outside professional advice if necessary. The complainant may not involve legal council until and unless formal legal action is instituted by any party to the complaint.

The official media contact for the IACUC will be the committee Chair and if the Chair is not available, then the IACUC Institutional Officer would act as official contact to the news media.

A summary of this policy will be posted in plain view within each animal facility at UPRA.

UPRA's student ombudsman and its policy complement this protocol: [POLÍTICA DE LA UPR SOBRE PROCURADURÍA ESTUDIANTIL](#) (Cetificación Número 119-2014-15 de la Junta de Gobierno)

