

TITLE	ACC SOP 403: Animal Welfare Assessment
SCOPE	The activities of the Animal Care Committee (ACC) operating under the direct authority of the University of the Fraser Valley
RESPONSIBILITIES	The Associate Vice President, Research & Graduate Studies, all ACC and members, all ACC Office Personnel, and all Researchers, Staff, and Students using animals for teaching, research, or testing.
APPROVAL AUTHORITY	Associate Vice President, Research and Graduate Studies
EFFECTIVE DATE	Aug 2025
Supersedes documents dated	May 2024

PURPOSE

To outline the procedure for animal welfare assessment of research studies and courses at UFV.

SCOPE:

To assure animal wellbeing of animals used for research, teaching, or testing at UFV.

In addition to the daily health checks of animals, studies performed or courses taught using animals at UFV will be assessed by a subcommittee of the Animal Care Committee or the PI for Animal Welfare status. Procedures in this document were developed from the CCAC Guidelines on Animal Welfare Assessment.¹ The evaluated parameters include the Five Freedoms of the animal, which were first described by the Farm Animal Welfare Council of the UK²:

Freedom from Hunger and Thirst.

Freedom from Discomfort.

Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease.

Freedom to Express Natural Behavior.

Freedom from Fear and Distress

The evaluation of the five freedoms will be guided by use of welfare indicators developed by Animal Care Coordinators, Veterinarians, and other experts such as animal care staff and technicians.

Animal Welfare Assessment (AWA) is required for all studies and courses. The frequency will depend on the duration and category of invasiveness.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Study PI or Course Instructor is responsible, to the best of their knowledge, to assign a category of invasiveness (CI) and early endpoints based on the previous studies, courses, or on available scientific literature. Endpoints and category of invasiveness may be adjusted based on the results of AWA process. They are responsible for conducting the initial AWA and any follow-up AWAs that may be necessary depending on the CI. They are responsible for documenting the AWA and sending it to the ACC coordinator by the end of the semester or study.

The AWA committee will be a committee of members from the ACC and the PI or course instructor. The committee members must not be in a conflict of interest with the assessed project. The AWA committee will only be assigned an AWA if an incident occurs or the CI is higher than a C. The PI/Course instructor may request a formal AWA be conducted.

The ACC coordinator will assign the AWA committee members by project and document the assessment if necessary. They will also collect and collate all AWA reports for the next ACC meeting.

The ACC will review the AWA reports and any additional recommendations at the next ACC meeting. This process may result in required changes to the AUP before it can be approved again.

The community or contracted Veterinarian will support the committee in the AWA process when deemed necessary.

DOCUMENTS

AWA Record Worksheet

Animal Welfare Indicator Aide Memoire

METHOD

The team includes the PI or the course instructor, and any additional members on the protocol that are involved in primary animal care. The team may also consist of two members from the ACC if applicable. The team will be responsible to undertake the assessment of assigned studies. A team approach is the most effective way to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Teams may use welfare indicator aide memoires developed together by CCAC approved institutions across Canada.

Frequency of AWA will be performed based on Categories of Invasiveness (CI). AWA and PAM may be combined for AUPs with minimal animal use.

All animal use protocols (AUPs) will undergo an animal welfare assessment.

Research on site:

For all categories of invasiveness B or higher, assessments will be performed once upon arrival as a baseline by the PI, and once according to the schedule below after animals have acclimated.

* For category C and higher, another assessment will be conducted within a week after invasive procedures as they occur and align them with the schedule below. General animal welfare will be monitored according to what was approved in the AUP for the study.

- For Studies up to 28 days assessment is performed once.
- For Studies of more than 28 days and less than 13 weeks assessment is performed twice.
- For Studies between 13 weeks and 26 weeks the assessment is performed three times during this period.
- For Studies more than 26 weeks the assessment is performed 4 times.

The assessment schedule will be determined by the ACC coordinator, the PI, and the assessment team according to the schedule of procedures.

If there are any major animal welfare incidents arising from one of the assessments, the ACC coordinator will follow-up with the PI and an additional AWA may be completed by a sub-committee of the ACC.

Research off site (field study or industry-owned animals):

- The PI will conduct a welfare assessment before beginning any procedures or handling any animals.
- The PI will video-record the procedures and submit this to the ACC coordinator for filing. The welfare of the animal will be assessed by the PI after the procedure or handling, recorded, and submitted to the ACC Coordinator.

Teaching:

- In addition to general animal welfare monitoring, a baseline welfare assessment will be performed once per semester by the course instructor after all animals have arrived, settled and acclimated.
- For category B protocols, one AWA assessment will be performed.
- For category C or higher protocols, an additional assessment will be performed within a week after the procedure.

- Additional assessments will be performed when an animal shows abnormal behaviour or there is a reportable animal welfare incident. This may involve the ACC.

All formal AWAs will be forwarded to the ACC Coordinator for review at the next ACC meeting.

Note: additional AWAs could be performed at the request of the ACC or ethics and compliance officer.

- The following information will be provided on the AUP before approval. The expected clinical signs (early endpoints) based on the previous studies, or scientific literature including expected morbidity and mortality percentage.
- Animal welfare assessment: initial evaluation

AWA Procedures:

1. Animal welfare data is established as early as the study is assigned so that welfare assessment is considered within the experimental design. Assessment indicators and tools will be simple and descriptive, not requiring diagnoses nor care in the field, pen, or tank side³.
2. The ACC coordinator will receive data as per item 1 from the PI within the ACC application form.
3. The ACC will evaluate if the resources and expertise indicated on the protocol are sufficient to allow for objective animal welfare assessment of those animals. If not, additional resources or training may be required, or the protocol may not be approved³.
4. Once the review of documentation is completed the review process will continue with an assessment.
5. All questions on the AWA worksheet must be answered during the monitoring process. Any observation related to the assessment should be recorded carefully.
6. Interim review of effectiveness of AWA within the study or course will determine if any adverse effects are being predicted, recognized, and alleviated.
7. A scoring sheet will be included in each approval and must be filled carefully. The scoring sheet will contain specific physiological and behavioural parameters e.g. body weight, physical state, physiological parameters and psychological state (animal behaviour). This is meant to complement, not replace, general animal welfare and health monitoring that occurs daily.
8. Special attention will be made to document the positive animal welfare.
9. Retrospective final review of the AWA data sheet: a retrospective review of Animal welfare assessment is recorded when the study is completed in conjunction with ACC and scientific reviews during the next ACC meeting. The actual adverse effects of the study and category of invasiveness assigned to the study, should be mentioned, including the refinement of humane endpoint and scientific endpoints when necessary.
10. Once the assessment completed, the worksheet Animal Welfare Assessment (AWA) is returned to ACC coordinator. If there are any adverse findings, the assessment should

be given to the ACC coordinator immediately. Otherwise, the report should be given to the ACC coordinator at the end of the semester or research study.

11. The coordinator will be responsible for reporting any adverse findings related to animal welfare to the ACC committee. The ACC Chair in conjunction with the ACC will take appropriate action along with the PI/Course Instructor to correct any deficiency and/or alleviate pain and distress and to determine early endpoints.
12. The ACC Coordinator will be responsible for circulating the form to ACC once it is completed and the AWA will be discussed when the ACC meets.

References

- 1) CCAC Guidelines: Animal Welfare Assessment:
https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/CCAC_guidelines-Animal_welfare_assessment.pdf
- 2) Farm Animal Welfare Council of the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fawc-report-on-farm-animal-welfare-in-great-britain-past-present-and-future>
- 3) Potential obstacles to assessing animal welfare:
https://ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Guidelines/CCAC_guidelines-Animal_welfare_assessment.pdf