IACUC Approved on 5/20/2026

University of Southern California

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Clinical Veterinarian Authority

A. Background

This policy clarifies the authority of the clinical veterinarian at USC who are responsible for the clinical care of the research and teaching animals. The clinical veterinarian has the authority to treat an animal, remove it from experimental protocol, relieve pain and distress, or perform euthanasia as necessary.

B. Definitions

Clinical Veterinarian: The Attending Veterinarian (AV) or designee (veterinary staff from the Department of Animal Resources)

C. Applicability

Per the USDA Animal Welfare Act (AWA): "Each research facility shall assure that the attending veterinarian has appropriate authority to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary care and to oversee the adequacy of other aspects of animal care and use."

Per the Institute for Laboratory Animal Research Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (The Guide) "The institution must provide the AV with sufficient authority, including access to all animals, and resources to manage the program of veterinary care." and "there should be a timely and accurate method for communication of any abnormalities in or concerns about animal health, behavior, and well-being to the veterinarian or the veterinarian's designee.
"For animals on research protocols, the veterinarian or veterinarian's designee should make every effort to discuss any problems with the principal investigator or project director to jointly determine the most appropriate course of treatment or action."
"…if the investigator and veterinary staff cannot reach consensus on treatment, the veterinarian must have the authority, delegated by senior administration and the IACUC, to treat the animal, remove it from the experiment, institute appropriate measures to relieve severe pain or distress, or perform euthanasia if necessary."

D. Policy

The Clinical Veterinarian has the authority to treat any animal, including up to euthanasia to preserve life or alleviate pain. Exceptions may be considered if IACUC approved protocols list death as an endpoint or allow unalleviated pain or distress.

INTERNAL

The Clinical Veterinarian will make a reasonable effort to communicate with the PI or designated contact listed on the cage card prior to any treatment or euthanasia. It will be up to the judgement of the Clinical Veterinarian to determine what an adequate amount of time to wait for a response from the PI or contact depending on the severity of the case. It is important for the contact to respond promptly to all veterinary communications, and it is upon the PI and their staff to ensure contact info is accurate and up to date.

If the lab has not euthanized within the allotted time frame and no efforts were made to communicate with the Clinical Veterinarian, the Clinical Veterinarian may charge their time to euthanize the animal. A persistent pattern of failing to respond to animal welfare concerns and veterinary recommendations could result in non-compliance reporting to the IACUC.

E. References

1. Animal Welfare Act and Regulations
   https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act
2. ILAR, Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals
   http://nap.edu/12910