

# Ethical guidelines for students in laboratory classes involving the use of animals and animal tissues



Australian and New Zealand  
Council for the Care of Animals  
in Research and Teaching

## Introduction

The use of animals or animal tissues in laboratory classes is a privilege that brings with it responsibilities. These responsibilities go well beyond the need to avoid cruelty to animals and involve a genuine commitment to their welfare and a respect for the contribution they make to your learning. Outlined below are principles to consider in helping you to meet these responsibilities and to derive maximum benefit from the use of animals in laboratory classes.

## Principles to consider

- 1. Consider why animals or animal tissues are being used in the laboratory**

The justification for using animals should be to enhance educational outcomes, while recognising that at the same time there is the potential for harm to animals to achieve these outcomes. Consideration should always be given to whether the educational outcomes could be achieved without the use of animals or animal tissues. Every student and staff member should be mindful of the Three Rs (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement) when working with animals in a teaching environment.
- 2. Consider the requirements for animal welfare and animal handling**

At all times the welfare of the animal you use is your responsibility not just your teacher's responsibility. This can be considered as a "duty of care". If you are required to handle animals during a laboratory class, it is important to follow the instructions of staff in the correct handling and restraint techniques for the species with which you are working.
- 3. Consider the regulatory environment**

The use of animals in research, testing and teaching is regulated in New Zealand by legislation under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. This Act has an underlying principle of a "duty of care". It also requires approval from an institution's Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) for work in the teaching environment that uses animals. Gaining this approval involves justification for using animals (species and number), the means by which animals will be handled and, if required, humanely killed, and the educational outcomes of the laboratory work balanced against any potential harm to the animals used. The skills of the staff involved and the supervision of the students are also evaluated. In fact, the questions raised by AECs should be those asked by each student regarding the use of animals in their laboratories.
- 4. Consider your own views in using animals or animal tissues in the laboratory**

You should discuss the use of animals and animal tissues with other students and staff. Opinions should be formed and aired, with appropriate justification, in an open and accepting environment. You should feel free to make suggestions that might improve future laboratory classes, and to this end, student opinion regarding the use of animals in teaching should be encouraged.
- 5. Consider your responsibility to make sure that good use is made of the learning opportunity**

You should know what underlying principles are being taught in the class and understand the details that illustrate those principles. This involves reading background material from lecture notes and references before coming to class, reading the laboratory manual before the class, and being generally prepared to maximise the learning experience. Use every opportunity, within the approved scope of the class, to develop manual, observational, and recording skills.

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ANZCCART has the following objectives:

- to promote excellence in the care of animals used in research and teaching and thereby minimise any discomfort that they may experience;
- to ensure that the outcomes of the scientific uses of animals are worthwhile;
- to promote the Three Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) as they apply to the use of animals for scientific purposes; and
- to foster informed and responsible discussion and debate within the scientific and wider community regarding the scientific uses of animals.

Websites: [www.rsnz.gov/advisory/anzccart/](http://www.rsnz.gov/advisory/anzccart/) and [www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/)