

PHS Vertebrate Animal Section Update

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National Institutes of Health
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare

Background

NIH is committed to conducting and supporting high-quality science in the interest of advancing public health and to the humane care and use of animals used in NIH research.

- Existing VAS unchanged since 1970's
- VAS Worksheet introduced in 2010 to improve consistency for applicants and reviewers
- Many current issues that may impact research with animals

PHS Policy Requirements

Applications and proposals... shall contain the following information:

1. identification of the species and approximate number of animals to be used;
2. rationale for involving animals, and for the appropriateness of the species and numbers used;
3. a complete description of the proposed use of the animals;

PHS Policy Requirements cont.

Applications and proposals... shall contain the following information:

4. a description of procedures designed to assure that discomfort and injury to animals will be limited to that which is unavoidable in the conduct of scientifically valuable research, and that analgesic, anesthetic, and tranquilizing drugs will be used where indicated and appropriate to minimize discomfort and pain to animals;

PHS Policy Requirements cont.

Applications and proposals... shall contain the following information:

5. a description of any euthanasia method to be used.

Objectives of VAS Working Group

1

- Improve VAS while maintaining PHS Policy requirements

2

- Reduce burden

3

- Remove redundancy with IACUC review

4

- Consider new issues

New Issues

1

- Rigor: reproducibility, blinding randomization, data handling, and sample size estimation

2

- Sex as a biological variable

3

- Source of dogs and cats

4

- Necessity of using animals based on IOM Principles

5

- Chimpanzee use

Working Group Actions

- 19 member Working Group from across NIH included program and review staff
 - Formed Subgroups for each VAS point
 - Awaiting outcome of NIH leadership decisions on rigor and sex as a biological variable
 - Revised VAS in application instructions, forms and worksheet to reflect updates
- Now sharing with internal NIH extramural management committees
- Will incorporate changes into NIH grant application instructions and forms for OMB clearance in 2015
- Effective for **January 2016 applications**

Proposed Implementation

