ETHICS SUBCOMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE

The UACC Ethics Subcommittee reflects on ethical issues and assists the Facility Animal Care Committees (FACCs) in their protocol review by offering guidance on those issues.

The Ethics Subcommittee reports to the UACC.

1. Membership

The Ethics Subcommittee members and Chair are appointed by the UACC for terms of no less than two years and up to four years, and can be renewed. The Chair can be an ethicist from within or outside the institution or a faculty member. The complement may vary according to the needs of the committee, but, at a minimum, includes:

a) A minimum of three scientists and/or teachers experienced in animal care and use, who may or may not be actively using animals during their term on the Ethics Subcommittee.

b) The UACC Vice-Chair or Chair (ex officio).

c) Veterinarian(s) experienced in laboratory animal medicine from McGill University, the McGill University Health Center and the Montreal Neurological Institute.

d) A consultant expert on specialized areas, as needed.

e) At least one, and preferably two or more, person(s) representing community interests and concerns, who has (have) had no affiliation with the institution, and who has (have) not been involved in animal use for research, teaching or testing for at least one year; community representation must be ensured for all Ethics activities throughout the year.

f) Person(s) qualified in bioethics.

g) A representative from an Animal Facility (Director/Manager/Supervisor) on a rotational basis.

h) The Animal Compliance Office representative(s).

i) The Ethics Subcommittee Administrator (from the Animal Compliance Office).

In order to avoid potential conflicts of interest, the Ethics Subcommittee must have a Chair who is not directly involved in the management of the institutional animal facilities, nor is the facility clinical veterinarian, nor is an animal health or veterinary personnel member charged with ensuring compliance with CCAC guidelines. In cases of absence or in case of conflict of interest (real or apparent) on a particular file, the Chair shall delegate responsibilities to a Vice-Chair, who must also meet the above qualifications.

Individuals may act in more than one capacity listed above, provided they are not in conflict of interest.

The Administrator supports the Ethics Subcommittee by ensuring that animal use protocols are well managed, that committee minutes and reports are promptly produced and distributed, that all exchanges between the Ethics, UACC, and FACCs are well documented and filed in a timely manner, and that FACC members are provided with necessary information.
2. Authority

The Ethics Subcommittee has the authority, on behalf of the UACC to:

a) Stop any objectionable procedure if it considers that unnecessary distress or pain is being experienced by an animal;

b) Stop immediately any use of animals which deviates from the approved use, any non approved procedure, or any procedure causing unforeseen pain or distress to animals; and

c) Have an animal killed humanely if pain or distress caused to the animal is not part of the approved protocol and cannot be alleviated.

d) Order the withholding of research funds and/or animal ordering privileges for programs in non-compliance with the applicable requirements.

The Ethics Subcommittee reserves the right to visit any areas where animals are or may be held or used.

The Ethics Subcommittee works with the FACCs, the Animal Compliance Office and members of the veterinary and animal care staff in ongoing discussions to ensure and promote compliance in animal welfare.

3. Responsibility of Ethics

It is the responsibility of the Ethics Subcommittee:

a) To recommend to the UACC such policies and guidelines as may be helpful for establishing high standards of ethical awareness and practice among the scientific community using animals in research and teaching.

b) To serve as a resource to the UACC and the FACCs in matters pertaining to the ethics of animal care and use.

c) The Chair will receive all approved D level, NHP, teaching and cloning protocols in view of bringing ethical issues to the Subcommittee’s attention.

In addition, as a quality assurance measure, and to keep the committee informed of the different projects undertaken, to conduct a review of a randomly selected newly approved Animal Use Protocols, using CCAC and University guidelines, as well as other applicable guidelines and regulations. The subcommittee will perform a review prior to approval of the protocol if requested by the FACC or UACC. Protocols may be of any category of invasiveness.

d) To recommend to a FACC such specific changes in an Animal Use Protocol that it may deem necessary to assist the FACCs in their review process and to ensure consistent review across the animal care and use program.

e) To report to the UACC on a regular basis and distribute generic protocol recommendations, exempt of identifiers, to FACC Chairs.
4. Meetings

Ethics Subcommittee shall meet at least four times a year and as often as necessary to fulfill its responsibilities. Minutes detailing discussions, decisions and modifications to protocols must be produced for each meeting, and must be forwarded to the Animal Compliance Office.

Quorum is the majority of the members, and must include community and veterinary representation. Meetings should be scheduled at times that are convenient for all members, including community representatives.

Ethics Subcommittee’s reviews and recommendations will be sent to the FACC Chair to be included in the agenda of the FACC. In the case of a major concern affecting animal welfare, the Ethics Chair will contact the FACC Chair to determine the appropriate courses of action(s).

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