TO: All members of McGill’s animal research community, including animal users, administrators, Animal Care Committee members, veterinarians, facility managers and animal care staff.

FROM: Prof. Denis Thérien, Vice-Principal (Research and International Relations); Prof. Anthony Masi, Provost; and Dr. Richard Levin, Vice-Principal (Health Affairs).

Dear colleagues:

Following McGill’s last assessment, the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), which is responsible for setting and maintaining animal care and use standards in science nationwide, is recommending that we clarify some aspects of our Animal Care and Use Program, especially its structure and the roles and responsibilities of its constituents.

Use of Animals in Research or Teaching at McGill University and its affiliated institutions

McGill University regards the use of animals in research, teaching, and testing to be an integral component of continued progress in certain areas of science, education, and agriculture. The use of healthy, well cared for animals has been essential for advances in the life sciences, medicine, and agriculture and has resulted in enormous benefits for human and animal health. McGill is committed to conducting the highest-quality research and to providing animals with the best care available. At McGill, the use of animals is subjected to rigorous institutional scientific/pedagogical merit review and to ethical review by Animal Care Committees to ensure that animals are used only when necessary and under humane and appropriate conditions.

Individuals using or caring for animals at McGill or its affiliated institutions have a responsibility to the scientific community and society as a whole for the proper stewardship of animals under their care. They should be aware that the use of animals in research and teaching is a privilege governed by public concerns, federal and provincial laws and regulations, CCAC guidelines and policies, and McGill University policies, procedures and guidelines.

All animal-based protocols conducted by members of McGill University or its affiliated institutions will comply with Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and McGill University policies and guidelines; will be peer-reviewed for scientific or pedagogical merit; will be approved by the local Facility Animal Care Committee (FACC) before animals are purchased and used; and will be performed in a facility which will ensure the safety of the staff and students while maintaining the health and welfare of animals through high standards of animal care and facility management.

Monitoring the Care and Use of Animals

It is important that all members of McGill’s animal research community understand the organizational structure currently in place that oversees compliance within this program.
The Vice-Principal (Research and International Relations) has executive responsibility for the Animal Care and Use Program. Although Deans and Institute or Hospital Directors have authority on operations of their specific facilities, all authority on matters of compliance within all constituents of the McGill network lies solely with the VP-RIR. The VP-RIR hears and decides appeals of administrative or Animal Care Committee actions and/or decisions.

Animal users (faculty members overseeing students, post-doctoral fellows and research technicians) have the responsibility of requesting to use only those animals that are absolutely necessary to their research or teaching goals, and of providing clear and complete written information on any instance of proposed animal use, or modified animal use, to their local FACC for approval before any animals are ordered or used. Once their protocol is approved, they have the responsibility of ensuring that they and their team follow the protocol as approved along with any conditions specified by the FACC, that any animal health and welfare concerns are promptly reported to the animal care and veterinary services, and that any deviations to or difficulties with the protocol are reported to the FACC.

The University Animal Care Committee (UACC) reports to the VP-RIR and is responsible for establishing University-wide policies, procedures and guidelines on the care and use of animals at McGill University and its affiliated institutions. The FACCs ensure that all animals used in research, teaching or testing within their jurisdiction, are used and cared for in accordance with CCAC and McGill University policies and guidelines. FACCs report to the UACC.

The Animal Compliance Office (ACO), headed by the Director of the Animal Compliance Office, reports directly to the VP-RIR. The ACO assists participants and administrators of the Animal Care and Use Program in remaining compliant to regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines. The ACO coordinates University-wide understanding of the requirements for the ethical conduct of research and teaching involving animals.

The UACC, FACC, veterinary services and the Animal Compliance Office have the right to access areas where animals are housed or used at all times, and must have access to information directly related to the health and welfare of animals and to procedures conducted on animals. The UACC, FACC or the Director of the Animal Compliance Office can suspend...
any activity involving animals if it does not comply with the approved protocol, or with applicable laws, regulations, policies and guidelines. While collegial work is strongly encouraged to resolve concerns, there will be clear consequences for any significant breaches of compliance.

The Animal Resources Director and other clinical veterinarians provide veterinary medical and preventive care to McGill’s animals, and assist researchers, students, and animal care personnel by promoting best animal practices. As members of UACC/FACCs, they are involved with the ethical review of protocols and the development of policies and standard operating procedures for animal care and use. The veterinary and animal care staff must also have access to information directly related to the health and welfare of animals and to procedures conducted on animals. The veterinarians have the authority to remove an animal from an activity that is adversely affecting its well-being beyond a level reviewed and approved by the FACC, or to euthanize it where it is in unrelievable pain or distress. The veterinarians will contact the research team to discuss the animal’s condition and will make every reasonable attempt to protect research data, but they also have full authority to exercise their professional judgement to protect animal welfare.

Education and Training
All faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students, research personnel, veterinarians, and staff members will have adequate training and experience before initiating a protocol, undertaking new procedures, and using or caring for new species.

We appreciate your careful attention to the information provided above, and we count on your continued respect of the principles that govern McGill’s Animal Care and Use Program.