



## McGill Animal Policy & Welfare Oversight Committee Policy on Reporting Serious and Major Animal Welfare Incidents

### 1. Purpose

This Policy describes the management and reporting of significant animal welfare incidents related to research and teaching animals. It applies to animals on the institutions' grounds as well as wild animals being studied.

### 2. Scope

The policy applies to everyone handling and/or witnessing animals, those mandated to oversee facilities or areas where live animals are present, anyone informed of animal related issues, those mandated by the institution or animal care committee to oversee compliance of users to institutional and Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) policies and guidelines and the Senior Administration.

### 3. Definition and procedure for Serious and Major Incidents

#### 3.1. Serious Incidents include but are not limited to:

3.1.1. Serious Incidents are more extensive than isolated health and welfare concerns, but do not have the deep impact on health and welfare and/or widespread impact that Major Incidents do. For example, a leaking water pipe causes a flood in a room housing chickens, but no chickens are injured.

3.1.2. An Animal Care Incident Report Form can be completed by the PI and submitted to the Animal Facility Manager or the matter directly reported to the veterinarian and FACC Chair.

3.1.3. The Veterinarian will collaborate with all appropriate individuals, including but not limited to the Facility Manager, Animal Care staff, PI and Research Staff Personnel, to identify the root cause of the event and develop appropriate corrective actions to prevent repeated events from occurring.

3.1.4. If not already done, the Veterinarian will immediately report the animal incident to the FACC Chair and others as appropriate. The Veterinarian will also report the Serious Incident with an update as part of the Veterinarian's Report during the regularly scheduled FACC meeting. The FACC will determine if this requires submission to the CCAC as a Major Animal Welfare Incident.

3.1.5. Serious incidents do not require immediate reporting to Senior Administration unless deemed appropriate by the FACC Chair.

### 3.2. Major Incidents include but are not limited to:

3.2.1. Catastrophic failure of critical life support system(s) for teaching or research animals that leads to an animal incident. Due to the complex nature of aquatic environments, mortality rates must be greater or equal to 50% of animals per day in tank of greater than 10 fish to qualify as catastrophic failure. For example, a faulty ventilation drastically increasing the room temperature causing the death of many frogs.

3.2.2. Flagrant disregard of approved practices or procedures leading to morbidity or mortality of animals in teaching and research projects, or that poses a serious threat to health and welfare. For example, a failure to follow SOPs resulting in animal death.

3.2.3. Significant and unanticipated illness, morbidity or mortality due to unrelated disease or toxicant exposure. For example, a tank of fish fry (babies) kept for future breeding purposes (no experimental procedures involved) suddenly dying from exposure to fumes coming from another lab.

3.2.4. Serious or repeated noncompliance with CCAC and institutional policies and guidelines that leads to the FACC suspending an animal-based activity that threatens teaching or research animal health or welfare. For example, continuing to ignore clinical endpoints despite reminders and warnings resulting in facility access being revoked.

3.2.5. An Animal Care Incident Report can be completed by the PI and submitted to the Animal Facility Manager or the matter directly reported to the veterinarian and FACC Chair. The Animal Facility will immediately report to the Veterinarian and FACC.

3.2.6. The Veterinarian will collaborate with all appropriate individuals, including but not limited to Facility Manager, Animal Care staff, PI and Research Staff Personnel, to identify the root cause of the event and develop appropriate corrective actions to prevent repeated events from occurring.

3.2.7. If not already done, the Veterinarian will immediately report the animal incident to the FACC Chair and others as appropriate. The Veterinarian will also report the Major Incident with an update as part of the Veterinarian's Report during the regularly scheduled FACC meeting.

3.2.8. The FACC will discuss and agree on appropriate actions to be taken. The FACC Chair will report the Major Incident to the CCAC within 10 days of their occurrence as described in CCAC Policy Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs, Section 3 "Reporting *Major Animal Welfare Incidents and Changes within a Certified Program.*" by completing and submitting the CCAC Major Animal Welfare self-reporting form The incident will also be reported to the Senior Administrator and a short summary to the APWOC at its next meeting.

## **4. Responsibility**

4.1. The Facility Animal Care Committees (FACCs) represent the institution's commitment to responsible care and use of animals in research and teaching through the implementation of policies and guidelines of the institution and the CCAC. It ensures monitoring of the activities related to animals via the Quality Assistance Program. It also ensures adherence to those policies and guidelines via its review and approval process of the Animal Use Protocol (AUP) submitted by the Principal Investigator or Principal Instructor (PI). It addresses any issues brought to its attention.

- 4.2. The Chair represents the committee and as such, is expected to work with members at reaching consensus on decisions and action items.
- 4.3. The Facility Manager (or Supervisor) is responsible for reporting all significant\* animal incidents to the Veterinarian, the PI and the FACC.
- 4.4. The PI is responsible for reporting all significant\* animal incidents to the Veterinarian and the Facility Manager.
- 4.5. The Animal Care staff are responsible for reporting all significant\* animal incidents to the Facility Manager, Veterinarian and PI. The Facility Manager is responsible for forwarding this report to the FACC.
- 4.6. The Research Staff Personnel are responsible for reporting all unexpected morbidity, mortality, and significant\* incidents involving animals to the PI, Facility Manager and the Veterinarian. The Facility Manager is responsible for forwarding this report to the FACC.
- 4.7. The Veterinarian is responsible for overseeing the health and welfare of all research and teaching animals in his/her area. The Veterinarian is responsible for reporting Serious and Major Animal Welfare Incidents to the FACC.
- 4.8. The FACC Chair is responsible for reporting Major Animal Welfare Incidents to the VP RI for McGill FACCs and to the Research Director for the Affiliated Research Institutes. The FACC Chair must also report to the CCAC, CCed to its Senior Administrator, within 10 days of the incident's occurrence. The FACC Chair must also give a short summary to the Animal Policy and Welfare Oversight Committee (APWOC) at its next meeting.
- 4.9. People who are, or appear to be, in conflict of interest must recuse themselves from discussions and decisions related to an incident.

## **5. Policy**

- 5.1. Animal incidents must be investigated to identify root causes and ensure proper practices and procedures are in place. Reporting near-misses is critical as it allows preventative practices and changes to be implemented before harm occurs.
- 5.2. Animal welfare incidents must be reported as soon as possible to the Veterinarian. The Veterinarian will assess the urgency and impact of the reported event and initiate medical care as needed. If a person fears consequences if reporting an incident, they can request anonymity and it will be maintained throughout the process of responding to animal health and welfare concerns and animal incidents.
- 5.3. Once immediate animal health and welfare have been assured, the incident will be reported to the FACC. The FACC will determine if it is a case of Major Incident to be reported to the CCAC or not. If a Major Incident, the FACC Chair will complete a Major Animal Welfare Incident (MAWI) report and submit to the CCAC, copying to its Senior Administrator and report a short summary to the APWOC at the next APWOC meeting.
- 5.4. The Veterinarian will treat the affected animal(s) as needed and review procedures, with appropriate consultation and cooperation of other units if needed, as necessary to mitigate a reoccurrence.

## 5. References

### 5.1 CCAC Policy Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs

<https://www.ccac.ca/Documents/Standards/Policies/Certification-of-animal-ethics-and-care-programs.pdf>

### 5.2 McGill University Animal Care Incident Report Form

[https://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/animal\\_care\\_incident\\_report\\_form\\_2013.docx](https://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/animal_care_incident_report_form_2013.docx)

*\* The term “significant” always includes Serious and Major Incidents but can also include Regular or Minor incident which were identified by those involved as needing to be reported.*

*New Policy approved by the APWOC (formally known as UACC) on April 20, 2021.*