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SCAR's Code of Conduct for the Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes in Antarctica

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Background

1. The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) Code of Conduct (CoC) provides guiding principles to the scientific community for research involving animals. National codes vary in the range of species they encompass but some include all Vertebrata as well as some Invertebrata. This Code of Conduct should be read in concert with Annex II of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which provides guidance on the killing, capturing and handling (“taking”) of native fauna and aims to provide guidance on the interpretation of Article 3 paragraph 6 of this Annex.

Introduction

2. This CoC was developed in recognition that humankind has a moral obligation to respect all animals and to have due consideration for their capacity for suffering and memory. However, it recognises that in carrying out scientific research there is sometimes a need to use animals where there is a reasonable expectation that the result will provide a significant advance in knowledge or be of overall benefit for animals.
3. The CoC recognises the need to limit the use of animals for experimental and other scientific purposes, with the aim of replacing such use wherever practical, in particular by seeking alternative measures and encouraging the use of these alternative measures.
4. The CoC encourages the adoption of common provisions in order to protect animals used in those procedures which may possibly cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm and to ensure that where unavoidable they shall be kept to a minimum.
5. Recognising the existence of national animal welfare legislation, this CoC is meant to support and supplement such legal frameworks, noting that nothing in this Code may supersede the provisions of such national legislation.

Code of Conduct

6. The advancement of biological knowledge and the development of improved means for the protection of the health and well-being both of humankind and of the animals require recourse to experimentation on intact live mammals and birds of a wide variety of species. However, such experimentation should only happen once a cost/benefit analysis has been undertaken by an ethical review committee with an independent membership. The benefits must be maximised and the costs in terms of animal use and suffering must be minimised. The ethical review process must determine whether such experiments can be replaced, reduced or refined.
7. Recourse to the use of animals in research should be made only once the use of mathematical models, computer simulation and *in vitro* biological systems have been found to be inappropriate or ineffective for the question under investigation.
8. The animals selected for an experiment should be of an appropriate species and quality, and only the minimum number required to obtain scientifically valid results should be used.
9. Investigators and other personnel should never fail to treat animals as sentient, and should regard their proper care and use and the avoidance or minimization of discomfort, distress, or pain as ethical imperatives, especially for vertebrates.
10. Investigators should assume that procedures that would cause pain in human beings could cause pain in other animals with developed nervous systems.

11. Surgical procedures with animals that may cause more than momentary or minimal pain or distress should be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anaesthesia in accordance with accepted veterinary practice. Neuromuscular blocking agents should not be used without an adequate level of anaesthesia or analgesia. Where appropriate equipment to ventilate the lungs and monitor the depth of anaesthesia should be used.
12. Animals that would otherwise suffer permanent pain, distress, discomfort, or disablement that cannot be relieved should be painlessly killed at the end of an experiment.
13. The best possible living conditions and supervision should be maintained for animals held in captivity for scientific purposes.
14. It should be the responsibility of the director of an institute or university department using animals to ensure that investigators and personnel working with animals have appropriate qualifications or experience for conducting procedures on animals. A system of supervision by experienced staff should be in place. Personnel should be trained in the proper and humane treatment and concern for animals under their care. A culture of care should be established and encouraged.