Recommendations: Handling Animal Care and Use Non-compliance

BOCA RATON, FL (June 20, 2018) – All individuals engaged in research involving animals, including researchers, husbandry and veterinary care staff, are required to follow a set of regulations governing research, testing and teaching with animals. Sylvia Gografe, D.V.M, Ph.D., director of comparative medicine and associate research professor, helped develop recommendations on how to deal with non-compliance allegations in a fair and standardized fashion that have been published in the *Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology* journal.

Developing non-compliance policies and procedures protects the welfare of research animals, advances the scientific integrity, and maintains the public trust, Gografe argues, along with her co-authors – researchers, veterinarians and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) administrators from several institutions.

IACUC is the regulatory body in a research institution that together with the institutional official and the attending veterinarian is responsible for overseeing compliance with these regulations. In their role as advocates for animals at research institutions, committee members review each protocol that describes research studies in detail. Committee members are also responsible for oversight once the experiments are conducted. As is the nature with research, things can go wrong, resulting in non-compliance. The IACUC must investigate any allegation of non-compliance made in good faith.

“The overwhelming number of non-compliance incidents I experienced in my professional career have been unintentional,” Gografe said. Research studies are very complex, time and labor intense, and a large number of regulations have to be followed, Gografe said. “IACUC is the regulatory unit of each institution and, with its many functions, is one of the most demanding committees in a university,” she said.

Therefore, policies developed, agreed upon, and implemented can be extremely helpful for all IACUC members, veterinarians and administrators to protect the research animals’ welfare, stay compliant with all federal and state regulations, and treat colleagues accused of wrong-doing in a fair manner.

“High quality science and animal welfare go hand-in-hand,” Gografe said.

Since its publication, the article has received quite a bit of attention from professionals engaged in research with animals, Gografe said. “It’s a must read for IACUC members, attending veterinarians, institutional officials and administrators supporting the animal care and use program of the institution,” Gografe said. “It can be used as inspiration to develop helpful standard operating procedures and policies.”

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