

Office of Research Services

Field Researchers Frequently Asked Questions

Q: My project involves the simple observation of animals in their natural habitat. Do I still need to submit an Animal Use Protocol to the Animal Care Committee?

A: If the presence of researchers at the location of observation has any likelihood of causing habituation to humans or altering the animals' behavior during their presence, then an Animal Use Protocol would be required (example: paddling kayaks closely towards nesting birds would likely cause the nesting birds to become agitated).

If the presence of researchers at the location of observation is unlikely to induce habituation to humans or alter the animals' behavior during their presence, then an Animal Use Protocol is not required (example: enumerating bird species that land on a beach normally occupied/used recreationally by humans).

If there is any question as to whether your project needs a protocol, please send a brief description of the project to the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca). The chair of the Animal Care Committee will review your description to determine whether further information or an Animal Use Protocol will be required.

Q: How do I know if the agency that has granted me funding conducts scientific peer review as part of its process?

A: All Tri-Council agencies (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) and many other organizations (e.g. MSFHR, The Arthritis Society, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada) provide a peer review for scientific merit. If you are unsure whether or not your funding application was peer reviewed for scientific merit, please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison for further guidance (acsc@uvic.ca).

Q: What should I do if my research has not been reviewed by an agency that conducts a scientific peer review?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison for further guidance (acsc@uvic.ca). The Office of Research will undertake a process of independent peer review. The policy associated with Peer Review for Scientific Merit is found here (section 14.00): [Policy RH8110 - Research and Teaching Involving Animals](#)

Q: My research is being conducted outside of Canada. Do I still need to submit an Animal Use Protocol to the Animal Care Committee?

A: Yes. Even though your research is not being conducted in Canada, researchers are expected to follow the same process of having their research ethically reviewed by the University's Animal Care Committee. The Animal Care Committee is aware that conditions may vary from location to location, and will work with the researcher to optimize best practices for performing research with animals outside of Canada.

Researchers should be aware that licensing requirements might vary from location to location. It is the researchers' responsibility to ensure that all licensing, safety, and other legal requirements are met PRIOR to conducting their research.

Q: My research is being conducted in collaboration with another research group outside of Canada. Do I still need to submit an Animal Use Protocol to the Animal Care Committee?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison for further guidance (acsc@uvic.ca). The policy associated with Collaborative Research Projects with other institutions involving animals is found here (sections 24.00 - 26.00): [Policy RH8110 - Research and Teaching Involving Animals](#)

Q: My research is being conducted in collaboration with another research group at a Canadian institution. Do I still need to submit an Animal Use Protocol to the Animal Care Committee?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison for further guidance (acsc@uvic.ca). The policy associated with Collaborative Research Projects with other institutions involving animals is found here (sections 24.00 - 26.00): [Policy RH8110 - Research and Teaching Involving Animals](#)

Q: What should I do if I am coming close to exceeding or have already exceeded the animal numbers listed on my Animal Use Protocol?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca) as soon as you are aware that you are coming close to or have exceeded your approved animal numbers. *Your protocol must be amended to reflect increased numbers.*

If the increase required is less than 10% of your currently approved numbers, your amendment may be able to be done following the Expedited Amendment route: [Expedited Amendment Form](#).

If the increase required is greater than 10% of your currently approved numbers, the Animal Ethics Liaison will guide you through the process of amending your protocol.

Q: During my field study, I encountered (captured/observed) unintended species that were not listed on my Animal Use Protocol. What should I do?

A: The Animal Care Committee realizes that fieldwork can be somewhat unpredictable. Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca) as soon as you are aware that you have encountered unintended species. They will guide you through the process of amending your protocol and notifying the Committee.

Q: For section 12c of the Animal Use Protocol, what constitutes an "Animal Used"? My research does not involve the capture, housing, or handling of animals; only observation. How should I answer this question?

If you are encountering animals through observation or any other means in such a way that their behavior may be affected, that constitutes a “use”, regardless of whether or not the animal is captured, housed or handled, and whether or not it is the targeted species.

For example, if your protocol describes minnow trapping species in a pond, all animals trapped are “used”, regardless of species. If your protocol describes a bait station from which still or motion-detected photographs are taken of animals, each animal entering the bait station is “used”. If your protocol describes seine netting where all animals are released, each animal caught in the seine is “used”.

Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca) if you have questions on “animals used” or any other aspect of your protocol. They will direct your question to the person best able to answer it for you.

Q: My field research includes capturing vertebrate and invertebrate species. Should I include the invertebrates on my Animal Use Protocol?

A: No. Currently, only vertebrate species and cephalopods (octopus, squid) fall under an Animal Use Protocol. However, licenses sometimes do require the enumeration of invertebrate species. Please check with the relevant (provincial, federal, municipal) licensing body.

Q: I am not working with laboratory species in animal facilities on campus; I am only doing field research. Do I still need to take the Animal Ethics online course?

A: Yes. Part A: Core Stream of the online course is relevant for all researchers performing studies with animals and provides a baseline understanding of the ethical use of animals for research. Additional training may be required by the ACC depending on the nature of the protocol.

Q: When does my field study report have to be submitted to the Animal Care Committee?

A: Your field study report must be submitted prior to the expiry of the Animal Use Protocol. We strongly recommend that the field report be provided to the Animal Care Committee as soon as the field study period has ended; often this is well in advance of the protocol’s expiry.

Q: During the field season, animals that we captured experienced unexpected injuries/mortalities. What should we do?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca) as soon as you can after the event. ***Do not wait until you prepare your annual field report.*** The Liaison will lead you through the process of reporting this unexpected event to the Animal Care Committee.

Q: I have no way of knowing how many animals we are going to observe/capture, which is why we are doing the research. How should I answer the questions in section 12c and 12d in the Animal Use Protocol?

A: The Animal Care Committee recognizes that field research can be unpredictable. You are expected to review current and historical databases, contact local, provincial and national wildlife authorities, and use statistical population models (where they exist) to provide a “best estimate” of the numbers and species you should expect to encounter in your field study.

The Animal Care Committee normally recommends that researchers err on the high side. Numbers can be refined (upward or downward) as researchers become more informed about expected populations and species during their field studies.

Q: How do I go about getting training for the procedures I will be conducting in the field?

A: Depending on the procedures you intend to perform in the field, training may be provided by University of Victoria Animal Care Services staff members, the University Veterinarian, in-house (faculty/researcher) experts, or external experts.

If in-house experts are to be used, the University Veterinarian, or Animal Care Services staff members are able to provide training in the procedures you intend to perform, please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison to arrange scheduling (acsc@uvic.ca).

If internal or external experts are going to be providing training, please fully describe the training process in your Animal Use Protocol. The Animal Care Committee must ensure that all researchers performing research on animals are adequately trained and proficient to perform their work. You may need to add internal or external experts to your animal use protocol, depending on what role they will play in the training of researchers. The Animal Ethics Liaison can assist.

Q: I am not sure whether licenses are required for me to conduct my field research. What should I do?

A: The relevant licensing body will depend upon the species and location of the work.

In British Columbia, the [Wildlife Act](#) covers a number of species and activities. The contact for the Ministry of Environment local office for Vancouver Island is here: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/van-island/>

Field research involving marine species in Canada requires contact with the [Department of Fisheries and Oceans](#). Personnel at this department can advise on licenses and permits that may be required.

If your work is being carried out at a foreign location, contact with the relevant government bodies well in advance of the field season is strongly recommended. Licensing and permit requirements vary widely between locations, as do wait times for the completion of documentation. Don't be disappointed! Start early! It is important that you specify precisely the procedures that you intend to do to the licensing agency, including transportation of animals, carcasses, or tissues (including feces). This information should be specified within the license. Don't assume that you have permission to transport without it being clearly outlined in the license.

Q: I have a new project, and fieldwork needs to begin over the summer months. The Animal Care Committee does not meet over the summer months. What should I do?

A: Please contact the Animal Ethics Liaison (acsc@uvic.ca). During the summer months, protocols are handled via an interim committee that is struck by the Chair of the Animal Care Committee. Following submission of the protocol, a decision is communicated to the researcher normally within 10 business days.

Additional Resources

[Research and Teaching with Animals Website](#) – here you can find Guidelines, forms, ACC Meeting Dates and Deadline and contact information, as well as:

- [Animal Use Protocol Help Sheet](#)
- [Submission of Application to the Animal Care Committee Flowchart](#)

[Animal Housing and Care Website](#) – here you can find reference material such as Standard Operating Procedures (contact acsc@uvic.ca for access) and additional information.

[OHSE information on Marine Research Safety](#)

[OHSE information on Fieldwork & International Travel](#)