

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS

**in Behavioral
Projects in Schools
(K-12)**

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS

**in Behavioral
Projects in Schools
(K-12)**

Every day, some new scientific discovery helps us better understand how and why we humans, as well as other animals, behave as we do. The knowledge that we obtain from behavioral research informs diverse areas of study, from the treatment of human behavioral disorders and drug addiction to stress management and public health policy; from conservation biology and pest control to gerontology and neonatal care. Laboratory animals play an essential role in this research. Indeed, without animal research, much of the work in these areas would come to a complete standstill.

Contact APA for More Information

For more information about the use of animals in psychological research, please contact the
APA Science Directorate
202-336-6000
science@apa.org
750 First Street, NE,
Washington, DC 20002-4242.



American Psychological Association

Today, in classrooms across the country, many elementary and secondary school students participate in demonstrations and research projects with live laboratory animals. The primary purpose of these activities is educational. That is, they are intended to teach students the principles of scientific research, to enable students to evaluate prior claims or assumptions about behavior, and to generate new knowledge. In an age in which scientific literacy is an increasingly critical component in every child's education, these goals can be realized by the creative use of live animal projects. Conducting research with laboratory animals is also a source of enormous intellectual pleasure and excitement. A student's interest in the life sciences is frequently initiated or enhanced by experiences working with live animals within an instructional setting. Early experiences in laboratory animal projects can also provide an environment that encourages original thought, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Of course, with the decision to use live animals for teaching and research purposes comes a responsibility to care humanely for them and to minimize pain or discomfort whenever possible. Working with research animals is a privilege, and our society has developed important rules and guidelines to ensure that these animals are treated humanely. For example, the use of vertebrate animals in teaching and research at colleges and universities must comply with strict U.S. government regulations set forth in the Animal Welfare Act¹ and/or the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, as well as the guidelines found in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*.² Likewise, projects in secondary schools that are intended for publication or science fair exhibition must comply with the requirements of the journal or fair sponsor (e.g., the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair), which relies on these same government standards. By following these rules and guidelines, researchers both ensure that animals are treated humanely and safeguard the continued use of animals in important behavioral research.

Because many psychologists conduct animal research, the American Psychological Association has established the Committee on Animal Research and Ethics (CARE), a committee whose mission is to help safeguard responsible animal experimentation. In response to this charge—and in the hope that all professional educators will join us in helping to protect the welfare of animals used in research and teaching—CARE has developed guidelines, described below, for the use of animals in behavioral projects in schools, K–12. These guidelines have been derived from the rules and regulations mandated by the federal government as well as APA guidelines for animal research in colleges and universities across the country,³ and they have as their basis important ethical principles that safeguard the humane treatment of animals.

It is important to recognize that this document constitutes guidelines, meaning pronouncements that support or recommend, but cannot mandate specific approaches or actions. Guidelines differ from what are sometimes called standards in that standards may be considered mandatory and may be accompanied by an enforcement mechanism. Instead, this document is intended to be aspirational in intent, and to facilitate and assist the activity addressed; it is not intended to be mandatory, exhaustive, or definitive, and may not be applicable to every situation. Finally, it is not intended to take precedence over the judgment of those who have competence in the subjects addressed.

CARE recommends that live animals be used only when an institution's resources are sufficient to enable teachers, students, and their supervisors to follow these guidelines.

- 1. All projects are planned and conducted** with humane consideration and respect for animal life. For projects that involve animal maintenance, only those animals that can be provided with humane care and easily maintained within the constraints of the institution's resources are selected.
- 2. Students and teachers inform themselves** of relevant federal and state guidelines for specific care and handling of their animals. A recommended reference is the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, available from the National Academy Press, 2102 Constitution Avenue, NW, Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055 or <http://www.books.nap.edu/books/0309053773/html/index.html>.
- Because some seemingly innocuous procedures (e.g., handling and, even, observation per se) may cause temporary discomfort for some animals, it is recommended that **any student undertaking a project involving live animals have a designated supervisor.** The supervisor is an individual who has had training or experience in the proper care of the species, as well as in the techniques and protocols to be used in the project. The supervisor assumes primary responsibility for all conditions of the project and ensures, by demonstration or documentation, that the student is trained in the care and handling of the animals as well as in the methods to be used.
- On the rare occasion that a student plans to conduct a study that potentially can interfere with the animals' health or well-being, it is recommended that the **study designate a qualified scientist to provide advice,** consultation, and training to the student or the designated supervisor. Under most circumstances, a qualified scientist is an individual possessing an earned graduate degree in the behavioral, biological, or medical sciences who has relevant expertise.

These differing guidelines, which encourage contact with a supervisor for most projects but with a qualified scientist whenever a study is likely to cause discomfort to animals, reflect the different types of projects that currently are conducted in schools. That is, most behavioral projects are intended for demonstration purposes and need not involve procedures that potentially interfere with the animals' health or well-being. However, other projects may, in some special cases, be sufficiently sophisticated to provide significant, original knowledge, and, thus, such interference is justified.

- 5. A written proposal or plan for conducting the project,** described below, is prepared and approved before any aspect of the project is initiated, including procurement of the animals. Preparation of such a proposal, by students and teachers alike, requires individuals to think carefully about how animals will be used in the project and, thus, contributes to the researcher's respect for animals' welfare. The written proposal is an important learning experience at all levels of research expertise and is required for scientific research in all colleges and universities.
- 6. The proposal provides detailed information** about all aspects of the project and addresses such important questions as:

- What are the specific purpose, plan of action, and predicted outcomes of the project or demonstration? CARE recommends that the proposal include justification of all methods and procedures.
- How will the animals be procured and from what source? (Handling of wild animal species typically requires a special permit obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior.)
- How will the animals be cared for at all times during the project? The fundamental needs for any animal's welfare are of primary concern. Minimally, CARE recommends that the proposal document describe how animals will be housed, fed, watered, and kept clean; what individuals will be responsible for providing animal care on a daily basis and for checking that care is being provided; and what arrangements will be made for animal care needs during weekends, holidays, and vacations.
- How will animals be protected from sources of disturbance or harm, including teasing by students? Who will be responsible for overseeing that the animals remain in good health throughout the project? It is recommended that the proposal identify a veterinarian who will be responsible for the medical care of the animals should an occasion arise at any point in the project.
- What is the rationale for the proposed project and how does this rationale dictate both the choice and number of animals to be used? CARE recommends that the proposal document clearly articulate that the author of the project has read and understood relevant available literature on the topic, has considered whether alternatives to live animals would better accomplish the instructional goals, and has thought carefully about the number of animals needed for the project. CARE also recommends that the proposal reflect the author's understanding of readings relevant to the species chosen.
- What are the proposed start and end dates of the project? Whenever an approved project is not finished by the specified end date, CARE recommends that the project author submit a request for an extension.
- What are the plans for the disposition of the animals after the project is complete?

7. Ideally, a proposal is reviewed by a group of individuals who have the professional knowledge to understand and evaluate it and who have the sponsoring institution's or organization's authority to approve or disapprove it. At the college and university levels, these review groups are called Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs). The purpose of the committees is to determine whether the provisions for animal care described in the research proposal are adequate to meet the needs of the animals and whether the procedures for animal use are humane. The sponsoring institution or organization maintains proposals on file for future reference.

8. Following completion of the project, the supervisor is responsible for documenting that the project was conducted and completed as approved. In addition, the supervisor is responsible for proper and documented disposition of the animals. If it is necessary that the animal's life be terminated, then the methods should be consistent with recommendations of the Panel on Euthanasia of the American Veterinary Medical Association.⁴ CARE recommends that K–12 students not perform euthanasia.

9. Teachers and students are encouraged to consult with the Committee on Animal Research and Ethics of the American Psychological Association for advice on adherence to the guidelines. In cases where facilities for advanced research by qualified students are not available, the Committee on Animal Research and Ethics will try to make suitable arrangements for the students. CARE can be contacted through the APA Science Directorate at 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002 or science@apa.org.

10. Schools are strongly encouraged to post a copy of these guidelines in a conspicuous location wherever animals are kept and projects carried out.

Endnotes

- Available from the USDA National Agriculture Library Animal Welfare Information Center, 10301 Baltimore Avenue, 5th Floor, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351 or at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/legislat/awa.htm>.
- Available from the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, National Institutes of Health, RKL1, Suite 1050, MSC 7982, 6705 Rockledge Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892-7982 or at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/phspol.htm>.
- APA *Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in the Care and Use of Animals* (1996). Available from the APA Science Directorate at 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002 or at <http://www.apa.org/science/anguide.html>.
- American Veterinary Medical Association. (2001). Report of the AVMA panel on euthanasia. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 218(5), 669-696. Also available at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>.

Adapted by the APA Council of Representatives on February 14, 2003.

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS in Behavioral Projects in Schools (K-12)

