

James Madison University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
Guidance on Addressing Animal Welfare Concerns

Reference: In accordance with the Animal Welfare Act(PL 89-544), Institutions with animal use programs are required to provide a method by which an individual can voice a concern or complaint regarding any aspect of the Institutions' animal use program without fear of retribution. One of the functions of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) is to review concerns involving the care and use of animals at the institution, per Public Health Service Policy on Humane care and Use of Laboratory Animals, OLAW, NIH, Aug 2002.

Purpose: To ensure compliance with this statute, James Madison University (JMU) has posted beside all entryway and animal housing room doors, a listing of how to voice a concern and personnel to whom this concern can be voiced. Posted as well is the method for anonymous reporting of concerns. Every person with vivarium access, to include principle investigators (PIs), students, animal care staff and IACUC members are made aware of the method of voicing concerns during mandatory vivarium training. Any member of the IACUC can receive a concern or complaint.

Procedures: When a concern is voiced, the IACUC must give due process to the concern.

1. The IACUC chair must appoint a subcommittee to investigate the concern. Preferably the subcommittee should be a minimum of 2 IACUC members who are removed from the situation instigating the concern.
2. The subcommittee members should gather pertinent information related to the concern. For example: Was this a one-time event? Were there extenuating circumstances that led to a failure in normal operations? Were animals injured during the event? Was there a danger to animal or human health and well-being?
3. Once the subcommittee has gathered information, this should be presented to all members of the IACUC.
4. Next, methods to mitigate the concern should be a part of the IACUC's deliberations. If the concern stemmed from an event (i.e., power failure, natural disaster, etc.) provisions should be specified in the disaster plan that protect the animals from harm.
5. Once the IACUC has decided the way forward, then a final report should be sent to the Institutional Official (I.O.). If necessary, a completed report should be sent to oversight or funding agencies.

If the concern was voiced anonymously, every effort should be made to inform all members of the research community of the concern and efforts to mitigate any potential harm to the well-being of the animals.