

Washington State University <i>Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee</i>	
Policy #40	“IACUC Review of Field Studies”
Approval Date: 7/11/2022	

A. Purpose

This policy describes the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review process for research and teaching activities involving non-domesticated, vertebrate animals and cephalopods in their natural habitat, hereinafter referred to as “field studies”, conducted under the auspices of Washington State University (WSU).

B. Background

WSU is dedicated to maintaining the highest standards for animal care and use in research and teaching activities including those involving free-ranging wildlife, while ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, policies, and regulations. Field studies have a unique set of requirements to be considered compared to research conducted in a laboratory or captive setting. This includes acquisition of local, state, and federal collecting permits, as appropriate; consideration of zoonoses and other hazards associated with wildlife; and challenges of working in a field setting. Intramurally, field studies must obtain either IACUC approval or an exemption.

C. Policy

1. Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator

i. Permits

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for acquiring and maintaining all necessary permits, including federal, state, and local approvals before the field study can start.

ii. Submission of Materials for IACUC/AWP Review

Prior to conducting any field studies, the PI must either submit an Animal Subjects Approval Form (ASAF) AND receive IACUC approval or obtain an exemption letter from the Animal Welfare Program (AWP) Office. In any case, firstly, the PI must submit an abstract of the proposed field study to the AWP at

iacuc@wsu.edu. The AWP will then determine if the study requires IACUC review or if it can be exempt, as defined by current policy, and will contact the PI.

a. IACUC Review and Approval Process for Non-Exempt Activities

Activities that involve manipulation of the animal or intentionally manipulating their environment will require IACUC approval. In such cases, the PI must submit an ASAF in the [MyResearch](#) database and receive its approval before the field study can start.

Examples of Non-Exempt Activities:

- Capturing animals by any means (trapping, darting, mist netting, etc.) for research- or teaching-related purposes.
- Baiting an area to monitor wildlife reaction.
- IACUC approval is required by the funding agency.

b. IACUC Exemption Process for Exempt Activities

Purely observational studies, in which animals are not manipulated for research purposes and their environment is not intentionally affected in a way that could alter the animal's behavior, are typically exempt from IACUC review.

An initial review of field studies will be conducted by the Animal Welfare Program staff and may include consultation with a member of the campus veterinary staff, IACUC Chair, or other IACUC members as needed. If the field study meets criteria for exemption from IACUC review, then an exemption letter will be issued. This document can be used as needed for publication or dissertation purposes.

If the scope of work changes and requires manipulation of animals or their environment, then an ASAF will need to be submitted prior to initiating the change.

Examples of Exempt Activities:

- Placement of camera traps **without** baits to assess species occurrence.
- Opportunistic noninvasive sample collection without animal contact or baiting (e.g., hair or fecal sample collection from the environment).

2. Responsibilities of the IACUC/AWP

The IACUC and the AWP are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and for overseeing its implementation.

D. Resources

1. National Research Council, 2011. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#). 8th Edition. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC.
2. [2016 Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists for the use of wild mammals in research and education \(ndsu.edu\)](#)
3. The Ornithological Council, 2010. [Guidelines to The Use of Wild Birds in Research](#). 3rd Edition. The Ornithological Council, Washington, DC.
4. [Guidelines for Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field and Laboratory Research](#)