

**Washington State University**  
***Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee***

**Guideline #4: Counting Animals**

**Approval Date: 04.25.2018**

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**A. Purpose**

The following guideline is provided to ensure that animals are counted accurately and consistently by personnel authorized to track animals in the IACUC database.

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**B. Scope**

This guideline applies to all animals produced or used under the auspices of a WSU IACUC approved protocol regardless of location of species.

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**C. Principle**

According to federal regulations, all vertebrate animals used in teaching, testing, exhibition, and research are to be accounted for by the institution. This accounting is done via approval of animal numbers on IACUC protocols and it is incumbent upon the institution to ensure the approved number of animals is not exceeded.

The NIH/OLAW further mandates that institutions appropriately monitor and document numbers of all animals acquired (through breeding or other means) and used in approved activities including genetic culls or those produced in excess of need.

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**D. Resources**

Guidelines for counting animals in vivaria or housing facilities:

- Count all live births (do not count still born animals). Counting neonates in animal species with altricial young can be delayed until the first cage change or weaning to prevent disturbance and subsequent maternal neglect or rejection.
- Count all animals that arrive alive from a commercial vendor or other source.
- When originally entered, animals should be listed under their approved or intended pain category if known. Refer to the guidelines for pain classification.

### **E. Accounting for Multiple Uses of Animals**

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In some circumstances, the same animal may be used for multiple procedures (e.g., blood draw and physical exam; stock animal and prolonged restraint; tissue harvesting and antibody production).

- If multiple procedures are done under the auspices of different protocols, the animal should be counted once against each protocol that it is used for.
- If multiple procedures are done under the auspices of a single protocol, an individual animal should only be counted once, at the highest pain category, on that protocol.
- No matter how many different procedures may be performed, the animal is still only counted one time per protocol. Performing multiple procedures on a single animal should be written in the IACUC protocol and approved by the committee before work can begin.
- If the individual is counted against a protocol and is then transferred to a different protocol (against which it should also be counted), and then return to the original protocol, it should not be counted again against the original protocol. In other words, an individual animal should only be counted one time against a protocol no matter how many different times it leaves and then returns to that protocol.

The counting of animals is crucial for ensuring that more animals are not used on a project than were approved by the IACUC. Using more animals than approved is a compliance violation.

Training for entering animal numbers into the IACUC database is available via the MyResearch database under the “Training Available” tab. Please contact the Animal Welfare Program at (509) 335-5353 or email [iacuc@wsu.edu](mailto:iacuc@wsu.edu) if you have any questions.