



**ACVO Vision
for Animals
Foundation**

Policy for Animals Involved in Research

The sole purpose of ACVO-VAF-funded research is to prevent, diagnose, and treat ophthalmic diseases. As such, this research often requires the involvement of animals in our research. Vision for Animals Foundation is passionate about ensuring that every animal participating in an ACVO-VAF-funded study is treated with respect and receives compassionate care, comfort, and protection from pain and distress. The ACVO-VAF Policy for Animals Involved in Research directs the study-selection process and helps ensure the physical health as well as emotional well-being of all animals affected by ACVO-VAF-sponsored research.

Guidelines:

1. Use of animals shall be humane and consistent with applicable laws and regulations and with standards established by local governing bodies whose function is the oversight of animals in research (i.e. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee [IACUC]). When a standard IACUC is unavailable (e.g. foreign country, veterinary practice, animal ranch/sanctuary, wildlife preserve, etc.), the ACVO-VAF requires the review of the proposed animal use by an equivalent institutional review committee/agency or an established collaborating institution's IACUC. Proposals involving client-owned animals are required to provide proof that a Hospital Executive Committee (or equivalent) protocol has been submitted or approved. The living conditions of all animals shall be appropriate for their species and contribute to their health and comfort. All animal care, husbandry procedures, and IACUC member structures shall, at a minimum, meet or exceed the guidelines set forth in the U.S. government's Animal Welfare Act, the Public Health Service's *Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, the National Research Council's Institute for Laboratory Animal Research (ILAR) *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (2011), the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology policy on use of animals in ophthalmic research, and/or further required regional regulations.
2. Investigators and animal care staff shall have appropriate qualifications and experience for conducting procedures on living animals per IACUC and/or Hospital Executive Committee approval. Each investigator on the study shall provide the required biographical sketch indicating those qualifications and experience.
3. ACVO-VAF requires IACUC, Hospital Executive Committee, or equivalent institutional review approval from the submitting institution for all clinical trials even though such approval may not be a requirement of the institution.
4. ACVO-VAF requires informed owner/responsible agency consent in all clinical/research trials. An informed owner/responsible agency consent form of minimum standards shall be executed by the Principal Investigator and be provided to the ACVO-VAF before funding.
5. ACVO-VAF reserves the right to perform announced or unannounced site visits and/or independent audits for program assessment and/or to investigate concerns dealing with animal welfare issues.
6. Funding requests shall include statistical evidence that the number of animals proposed in the study is appropriate and minimally adequate to achieve the proposed results. It is also imperative that scientists requesting support shall review relevant literature (local and foreign) to prevent

unnecessary replication of research, unnecessary utilization of animals or unnecessary utilization of health study funds.

7. Every animal shall have compassionate care, comfort, and protection from abuse and unnecessary pain and distress. Investigators shall minimize stress and fear in individuals or populations of animals.
8. Investigators shall ensure that animals are appropriately socialized for their species and shall provide environmental enrichment.
9. Whenever possible, in compliance with institutional requirements, and when in the animal's best interest, investigators shall return the animals to the owner/responsible agency or make companion animals available for adoption at the end of the study.
10. ACVO-VAF Grants Committee shall evaluate each proposal for scientific merit, relevance for optimizing animal health and consideration of animal welfare (minimizing discomfort, distress, pain).
11. ACVO-VAF shall not fund health studies on an animal that require euthanasia as the study end point or induction of disease, unless 1) the nature of the disease or condition to be studied is of such significance for improving animal vision health that a terminal end point is justified (investigators shall be required to address euthanasia in all ACVO-VAF grant applications); and 2) meaningful information can be obtained no other way (i.e. alternative models have been thoroughly evaluated). All studies being considered for funding that require euthanasia as the study end point or induction of disease will be reviewed to ensure scientific integrity is maintained.
12. ACVO-VAF shall not fund animal health studies that induce or allow pain or distress, unless 1) the nature of the disease or condition to be studied is of such significance for improving animal health that induction of pain or distress is justified; and 2) meaningful information can be obtained no other way (i.e. alternative models have been thoroughly evaluated) and such pain or distress can be adequately controlled by appropriate anesthetic, analgesic or tranquilizing drugs. All studies being considered for funding that require the induction of pain or distress will be reviewed to ensure scientific integrity is maintained.
13. ACVO-VAF considers euthanasia acceptable when an animal develops unanticipated illness or injury that results in pain and suffering that cannot be alleviated with standard methods.
14. ACVO-VAF reserves the right to terminate a study if progress is deemed unsatisfactory or if there are concerns about animal well-being.