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RU-AREC Guidelines

Use of Animals Not Collected on Permit for Research or Teaching Activities at Rhodes University

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Date when this SOP becomes operational: 15th July 2021 or the earliest possible date thereafter

Date of the review: 1st April 2024 or as deemed necessary by the RUAREC

Table of contents

Guidelines on the use of animals that were not collected on permit	2
1. Use of animal specimens in collections	2
2. Use of animal remains.....	2
3. Use of animals that were killed during “pest control” activities	3
4. Use of poached animal specimens/tissues	3
5. Use of animals collected during commercial/non-commercial activities	4
6. Category not mentioned here	4
References	4

Glossary of terms

Animal – Organisms of the taxonomic group Vertebrata, Cephalopoda or Decapoda.

RUAREC – Rhodes University Animal Research Ethics Committee

Guidelines on the use of animals that were not collected on permit

The ethical review process by the RUAREC is intended primarily to ensure the welfare of animals during Research or Teaching activities. However, project work might use animal subjects, but the subjects are previously killed or are accessioned into collections as voucher specimens. The project activities are therefore not involving live animals. The RUAREC may require full ethics application for projects if the animal subjects and/or their tissues are sourced from the sources detailed in the sections hereafter. Please refer to the section that pertains to your research/teaching activities for further guidance regarding application for ethical clearance.

1. Use of animal specimens in collections

The use of animals that are vouchered into official collections – e.g., museum collections, collections in institutional collections (such as at SAIAB), collections in university laboratories – does not require ethical clearance. Many specimens in collections were collected prior to the requirement of national collection permits and ethical approval. If vouchered specimens and live animals will be used in the project activities, then full ethical clearance is required for the use of the live animals. In so far as possible, animals that are killed during a project's activities should be accessioned into a collection.

2. Use of animal remains

If animals are killed for a scientific purpose (i.e., for research or teaching), approval from the RUAREC for the use of the animal, including the killing of it, is required. Remains include cadavers, tissue samples, genetic material, body fluids, excreta, bones etc. If no aspect of the animal's life and death would be altered for the scientific purpose (i.e., if the animal's life and death would have remained the same whether or not the scientific purpose occurred), then ethical clearance is not required for the use of the animal's remains. In accordance with the ethical principles of "Reduction" and "Refinement", the RUAREC encourages the sharing of

tissues or remains of animals in additional activities, provided that the initial use and death of the animal was approved as required.

No ethical clearance is needed for the following cases:

- Use of remains from animals killed as part of routine commercial food and fibre production; e.g., sourced from butchers, fish shops or abattoirs.
- Use of remains from animals killed at veterinary clinics or shelters for other (veterinary and/or management) reasons.
- Use of carcasses or samples from animals found dead (e.g., roadkill). Researchers may not purposefully kill the animal and pass it off as found remains for scientific purposes (e.g., purposefully swerving a car to hit an animal and pass it off as “roadkill”).
- Use of tissue samples stored in laboratories from animals whose care and euthanasia has already been approved and monitored as part of an earlier RUAREC-approved activity.

3. Use of animals that were killed during “pest control” activities

Full ethical approval is not required for the use of animals killed or collected during pest control activities. “Pest control” is defined as the eradication of pest animals by either catch-and-release of the pest animals to a different area or killing of the pest animals. In the case of the killing of the pest animals, pest control operators must either be registered with/accredited by a national body (such as the Pest Control Industries Professional Council – PCIPC) or at the very least comply with South African Legislation regarding pest control activities. If the pest control activity is being carried out by an individual not accredited to do the work, valid hunting or collecting permits must be obtained prior to the pest control activity (e.g., trapping and killing of “pest” animals preying on livestock). If the animal was killed by an individual that is neither registered or accredited by a national pest control body or that didn’t possess valid hunting/collecting permits prior to the killing of the animals, a full ethical application is needed to determine whether those animals can be used for scientific purposes.

4. Use of poached animal specimens/tissues

“Poached animals” are defined in this context as animals that were acquired during poaching activities, and then subsequently confiscated by authorities when the poachers are caught. A full ethical application for the use of these dead poached animals for scientific purposes is not required; however, a full application will be required if the poached animals are still alive. In order to use the poached animals for scientific purpose, a police or official log of the

specimens/tissues must be provided as proof of source of the animals. If the poached animal species are considered Endangered or Critically Endangered (IUCN conservation categories), then full ethical approval is required.

5. Use of animals collected during commercial/non-commercial activities

The use of remains from animals that are killed for commercial use (e.g., obtained from butcheries or abattoirs, commercial fisheries) does not require a full ethics application. Animal remains obtained from non-commercial sources (such as artisanal fisherman) may require full ethical clearance, to provide evidence that the fisherman/hunter has the relevant permits for the fishing/hunting activities.

6. Category not mentioned here

If your research activity proposes to use animal specimens or tissues of a kind not mentioned in these Guidelines, and that the animal specimens/tissues were not collected under a valid ethical approval process, kindly contact the RUAREC Chair for advice on whether a full ethical application process is required or not.

References

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