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| IACUC SOP: | SOP Field Studies | |
| SOP#117.00 | IACUC Approved: 4/14/2023 | IO Approval: 4/20/2023 |

Purpose:

This SOP 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 Texas A&M University- San Antonio.

A. Background

A&M-SA 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.

B. 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. Training

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for providing the field site training and related documents to all team members. This training includes at a minimum

- a.** Risks and hazards associated with the field site and species collected
- b.** Approved field research safety plan
- c.** Potential risks encountered in the field (snakes, spiders, vermin, etc)
- d.** Any required vaccinations or prophylactic medications necessary
- e.** Training on handling the target species and procedures in the protocol

The PI is responsible for maintaining all necessary documentation.

iii. Submission of Materials for IACUC Review

Prior to conducting any field studies, the PI must submit the field study Animal Use Protocol (AUP) AND receive IACUC approval or obtain an exemption letter from the IACUC Office.

iv. Review Process

- a. All applications will be subject to administrative pre-review to determine if the study requires IACUC approval or not.
- 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.

Examples of Exempt Activities:

- Observational studies without interaction with animals.
- 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).

- c. *IACUC Review and Approval Process for Non-Exempt Activities* When the protocol has procedures that involve manipulation of the animal or intentionally manipulating their environment they will require IACUC approval.

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.

After initial review of field studies application by the IACUC office, the application will be forwarded to IACUC Chair, or Designee or AV to confirm the findings. 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 animal use protocol will need to be submitted and approved prior to initiating the procedures.

2. Responsibilities of the IACUC

The IACUC is responsible for ensuring compliance with this SOP and for overseeing its implementation.

References

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 Mammologists 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](#)

History:

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