

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify the appropriate application and classification procedures for protocols that involve free-living wild animals in a field setting for research and/or teaching.

Policy

Application Form Determination

It is the policy of the IACUC that all projects involving free-living wild animals must be subject to review and approval by the Committee. The appropriate application form is selected based on the details of the proposed project.

- The standard “IACUC Protocol and Three Year Renewal Form” must be used for any project conducted on free-living wild animals that involves interaction with the animal(s).
- The “IACUC Protocol Form for Animal Observational Wildlife Studies” may be used for projects conducted on free-living wild animals that do not involve any interaction with the animal(s). This is an abbreviated form rather than the standard IACUC Form.

AWA “Field Study” Classification

The USDA Animal Welfare Act (AWA) defines a “Field Study” as “a study conducted on free-living wild animals in their natural habitat. However, this term excludes any study that involves an invasive procedure, harms, or materially alters the behavior of an animal under study.” Use of free-living wild animals for protocols that do **not** qualify as a “Field Study” per the AWA definition must be reported in the annual report to the USDA. Therefore, protocols involving interaction with free-living wild animals must be classified by the Committee in order to determine reporting requirements.

Determination of whether proposed protocols qualify as “Field Studies” per the AWA definition must be made on a case-by-case basis, as the determination depends heavily on the specifics of the protocol, including the species, methods, and number and outcome of procedures. **If a protocol is classified as a “Field Study” per the AWA definition, the PI must provide animal use numbers to the Office of Research Integrity upon request.**

MAY QUALIFY AS A “FIELD STUDY”

- Live-trapping animals in humane traps and holding for brief periods
- Short-term handling of animals at the site of capture or nearby processing location
- Collecting external morphometric data
- Marking the external surface of the animal via non-permanent techniques (e.g., marker or hair clipping)
- Swabbing of the mouth, nostrils, cloaca, or rectum
- Collecting blood via needle or skin nick
- Injecting sterile liquids or materials (e.g., transponder tags) that are not expected to alter an animal’s activity or behavior
- Attaching external bands or tags to limbs or ears that are not expected to alter an animal’s activity or behavior

MAY NOT QUALIFY AS A “FIELD STUDY”

- Live-trapping and holding for extended periods
- Sedating or anesthetizing to immobilize
- Performing surgical procedures that expose underlying tissues
- Performing endoscopic and gavage procedures
- Toe-clipping
- Delivering chemicals that may alter an animal’s activity or behavior
- Conducting euthanasia by inhalation, chemical injection, or humane kill trap
- Transporting animals away from the site of capture or nearby processing location
- Releasing animals away from site of capture
- Repeatedly disturbing animals during breeding and rearing of young
- Performing any other procedure that alone or in combination would reasonably be expected to cause more than slight or momentary pain or distress

Collection Permits

Investigators are responsible for securing and renewing all appropriate wildlife collector’s permits and providing valid copies to the Committee for review and approval.

References

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. (2023, July). *Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations* (Publication Number APHIS 41-35-076).

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/AC_BlueBook_AWA_508_comp_version.pdf

Arizona State University Research Compliance. (2024, August 8). *Guidance for Determining USDA “Field Study” Exemptions*. <https://researchcompliance.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2024/06/Determination-of-USDA-Field-Studies-Guidance-Document-8.22.2024.pdf>