

# MONITORING OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING PROJECTS

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The *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*, 8th Edition, 2013 (The Code) has been released.

The Code defines monitoring as “measures undertaken to assess, or to ensure the assessment of, the wellbeing of animals in accordance with the Code. This occurs at different levels (including those of investigators, animal carers and animal ethics committees.”

## **Responsibilities under the Code**

**Institutions** are required to promote compliance by providing “adequate resources to ensure the AEC and people involved in the care and use of animals can meet their responsibilities, including monitoring animals”. **Institutions** are required to ensure that guidelines for the “monitoring and assessment of animals” are to be “developed in consultation with the AEC, approved by the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC), and implemented and promoted within the institution”.

The Code also stipulates that the **institution** “must identify clear lines of responsibility, communication and accountability by ensuring that a person is responsible for the well-being of animals at any given time and is clearly identified”. The code expects “monitoring by competent people” and that the “scope of day-to-day monitoring must be clearly outlined and communicated to all parties”.

**The AEC** must “monitor the care and use of animals, including housing conditions, practices and procedures involved in the care of animals in facilities” by “inspecting animals, animal housing and the conduct of procedures, and/or reviewing records and reports.” The full extent of the **AEC** responsibilities is described in Section 2.3.17 to 2.3.23.

### **Investigators:**

- Are required to have “procedures in place for the monitoring and managing of animal health” from the planning stage of their project.
- Must provide “details of how the well-being will be monitored and assessed throughout the project, the frequency of monitoring and assessment, the actions to be taken if problems are identified, and the criteria for intervention points and humane end-points”.
- Are responsible for ensuring animal monitors are competent and “knowledgeable about the normal behaviour and signs of pain and distress for the species” or are “under the direct supervision of a competent person”. Those responsible for monitoring must be clearly identified.
- Must “take steps at all times to safeguard the wellbeing of animals by avoiding or minimising known or potential causes of harm” by:
  - Ensuring “that animals are monitored and assessed at all stages of the project for signs of pain and distress, including deviations from normal behaviour.”
  - Conducting assessments at “a frequency sufficient to detect such signs at an early stage, as determined by the procedure, and ensure that the planned end-points are detected.”
  - Keeping records of monitoring and assessment of animal well-being.
  - Taking “prompt action” in accordance with “intervention points and humane end-points approved by the AEC”.
  - Clearly outlining the scope of monitoring and “communicating to all parties” including animal carers.
  - Regular reporting on “the monitoring of a new animal line at a frequency determined by the AEC.”

**Animal Facilities Managers** and **Animal Carers** have the same responsibilities in terms of frequency of assessments, competency, record keeping, interventions and reporting to the investigator and the AEC.

More detailed information about monitoring methods, assessment criteria and actions etc. are available in Section 3.1.21 to 3.1.28.

### **Monitoring Sheet Development Package now available**

Recently the UWA AEC endorsed a *monitoring sheet development package* to provide some guidance to researchers regarding AEC requirements for monitoring. Fortuitously, this has pre-empted the requirements of the new Code. This guidance is available at the Animals and Research website.

The *monitoring sheet package* includes four documents that will be periodically updated to ensure consistency with the current AEC requirements.

The first is MONITORING SHEETS STEP-BY-STEP which provides step-by-step instructions (with examples) on how to design a welfare monitoring package to accompany an AEC application.

The second is the COVER SHEET document which provides a framework that stimulates you to provide information on relevant welfare monitoring metrics and intervention points.

The third document provides examples of welfare monitoring criteria for rodents. This is not a complete list and you may need to include criteria that are more directly relevant to the project. It does provide some general monitoring criteria and a simple scoring system and these can be cut and pasted into the monitoring COVER sheet. The Animal Welfare Veterinary Advisors ([AWVAs](#)) are available to assist with developing criteria for other species such as wildlife, fish, marine creatures, production and other laboratory species.

The fourth document is the RECORDING sheet. It is a requirement of the AEC that monitoring sheets are kept with the animal being monitored.

### **Anaesthetic monitoring**

For projects that include **general anaesthesia**, the code states that “the depth of anaesthesia must be adequately monitored throughout the procedure” and that there “must also be appropriate monitoring and management of potential side effect, such as hypothermia, and cardiovascular and respiratory depression. Anaesthetic monitoring records should be kept as appropriate.” It also states that “clinical records of an animal’s state must be kept, including observations and administration of any drugs, fluids or other treatments, and made accessible to all personnel involved in the post-operative care of the animal”. “Investigators must ensure that adequate monitoring, treatment and care of post-operative animals is provided and that they are fully informed of each animal’s state.”

For more information about anaesthetic monitoring contact the [AWVAs](#).