

The WCU IACUC has the authority to approve, require modification, or disapprove all research or teaching activities using animals. The committee reviews all projects at a convened meeting, except where projects qualify for designated member review.

Full committee review is required for a project meeting any of the following:

- PI has listed the USDA pain category as category E
- Multiple survival surgeries will be performed on the same animal
- A committee member has requested full committee review

Full committee review may only be conducted when a quorum of committee members is present. A quorum consists of a simple majority of the members of the committee. Quorum must be met prior to initiating any discussion of a research proposal and must be maintained through the entire discussion and voting. Maintenance of quorum must be documented in meeting minutes. All members present at a meeting have full voting rights. No member may participate in the review or approval of an activity in which that member has a conflicting interest (e.g., is personally involved in the activity), except to provide information requested by the committee, nor may a member who has a conflicting interest contribute to the constitution of a quorum.

If full committee review is not required, review may be conducted by the designated reviewer. A designated reviewer will have all the authority of the full committee, except they may not disapprove a project.

Criteria for approval:

1. Procedures with animals will avoid or minimize discomfort, distress, and pain to the animals, consistent with sound research design;
2. The principal investigator has considered alternatives to procedures that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress to the animals and has provided a written narrative description of the methods and sources used to determine that alternatives were not available;
3. The principal investigator provides written assurance that the activities do not unnecessarily duplicate previous experiments;
4. Procedures that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress to the animals will be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anesthesia, unless the procedure is justified for scientific reasons in writing by the investigator and will continue for only the necessary period of time. These procedures will include, in their planning, consultation with the attending veterinarian or his/her designee, and not include the use of paralytics without anesthesia;
5. Animals that would otherwise experience severe or chronic pain or distress that cannot be relieved will be painlessly euthanized at the end of the procedure or, if appropriate, during the procedure;
6. The animals' living conditions will be appropriate for their species and contribute to their health and comfort. The housing, feeding, and nonmedical care of the animals will be directed by the attending veterinarian or other scientist trained and experienced in the proper care, handling, and use of the species being maintained or studied;
7. Medical care for animals will be available and provided as necessary by a qualified veterinarian;
8. Personnel conducting procedures on the species being maintained or studied will be appropriately qualified and trained in those procedures;

9. Methods of euthanasia used must be in accordance with the recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), unless a deviation is justified for scientific reasons, in writing, by the investigator.

Submission and Screening

1. Faculty/staff/students of WCU must submit an "IACUC Animal Use Protocol" and any associated permits in InfoEd.
2. External investigators with IACUC approval from their home institution should first discuss research plans with the Executive Director of HBS to ensure the research can be performed at HBS. Once receiving initial confirmation from HBS, external investigators must submit the following to the Highlands Biological Station Executive Director and the WCU research compliance office (IACUC@wcu.edu):
 - a) The animal use protocol and documentation of approval from their home institution.
 - b) Any related permits
 - c) The "HBS IACUC Application," highlighting the activities they are proposing to undertake at Highlands Biological Station
3. External investigators without their own institutional IACUC approval should first discuss research plans with the Executive Director of HBS to ensure the research can be performed at HBS. Once receiving initial confirmation from HBS, external investigators must submit the following to the Highlands Biological Station Executive Director and the WCU research compliance office (IACUC@wcu.edu):
 - a) The "HBS IACUC Application," containing the full animal use protocol and the activities they plan to conduct as part of their proposed research at Highlands Biological Station.
 - b) Any related permits
4. The research compliance office receives the submission and conducts an initial review for completeness of materials and verifies adequate training for all personnel. For protocols from external investigators, the compliance office will create a record in InfoEd from the materials received from the investigators (2 and 3 above). The research compliance office will email the Safety Officer notifying them of personnel and species involved in the application so appropriate safety training can be assigned.
5. The research compliance office routes the application to committee members. Committee members have one week to review the material, provide comments, and request full committee review.

Designated Member Review

1. If no full committee review is requested, the research compliance office will route the protocol with committee comments to the designated reviewer. The designated reviewer for HBS will typically be the executive director, who may solicit input from other committee members.
2. The designated reviewer will transmit any comments or requested revisions to the researcher in writing. A designated reviewer may approve or request modifications to a project, but they may not disapprove a project.
3. At any time during the designated review, the reviewer may request that the protocol be reviewed by the full committee.
4. If an application is approved, the research compliance office will email an approval letter to the researchers. If the designated reviewer requests full committee review, the process below will be followed.

Full Committee Review

1. The HBS Executive Director or designee serves as the primary reviewer for the project. The primary reviewer is responsible for conducting an in-depth review and presenting an overview of the project to the other