



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*

## **RUAREC Standard Operating Procedure**

### **Research and Teaching Activities with Higher Primates at Rhodes University**

**Drafted by:** Dr. Shelley Edwards (Chairperson of Rhodes University Animal Research Ethics Committee – RUAREC) and Associate Professor Roman Tandlich (Deputy Chairperson of RUAREC)

**Inputs by:** Siyanda Manqele (Ethics Coordinator, Research office of Rhodes University) and Jaine Roberts (Rhodes University Research Office) and RUAREC

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## 1. Background of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Ethical review and clearance/approval processes of research and/or certain teaching activities involving animals as defined below (referred to as research and teaching in further text of this SOP), must follow rigorous procedures, adhere to stringent standards, as well as fulfil national and international legal/accreditation requirements and best practices. This SOP and all its parts apply to activities in research and teaching that are conducted in/by:

- All academic departments of Rhodes University;
- All institutes affiliated with Rhodes University;
- All investigations conducted by affiliated researchers working with animals at Rhodes University (these are academic and support staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates and senior research associates).

The above-mentioned academic units and/or individuals are referred to as RU stakeholders in further text of this SOP. Overall, all the unit operations and steps involved in the ethical review and clearance/approval processes of research and teaching at Rhodes University are aimed at achieving the following:

- To produce of new knowledge as part of the academic project at Rhodes University that involves animals;
- To validate, review and continuously update the subject matter and content that are taught as subject matter in all disciplines at Rhodes University which have animal ethics implications;
- To ensure that the knowledge produced and/or validated must be of high standard, as to withstand the peer-review and all other review standards in a given academic discipline in which results of studies that involve animals are published;
- To achieve comprehension and understanding of the necessary and prescribed knowledge of animal physiology, behaviour and other related aspects of curriculum outcomes and/or degree requirements in a particular academic discipline;
- To conduct research and teaching according the principles of academic integrity, fairness and with respect and with the view towards the protection of animals rights;
- To contribute to the preservation of the habitat and the protection of populations of higher primates in South Africa, on the African continent and internationally.

In light of the above principles and any other relevant ethical considerations, there are several stages to the animal ethics review process and ongoing monitoring of research and teaching. To ensure that the above mentioned tenets are achieved, one of the steps in the ethical review and active process is the careful scrutiny to prevent unnecessary harm to all sentient animals and higher primates specifically in any and all research and teaching activities by RU stakeholders.

In conjunction with the above, it is stated clearly here that there is an urgent and ongoing need to maintain competence and familiarity by RU stakeholders with the necessary procedure to properly handle and to properly conduct research and teaching with all higher primates properly. To achieve this, this SOP is designed to achieve two main aims. Firstly, the SOP is aimed at outlining procedure(s) that is to be followed by all RU stakeholders with respect to the relevant research and teaching activities that involve higher primates. In that context, higher primates refers to the “old world monkeys” such as baboons and macaques; and the “new world monkeys” such as marmosets and squirrel monkeys (UKMRC, undated a,b). In addition, higher primates include “lower apes”, such as gibbons, and the “greater apes” such as chimpanzees and gorillas (UKMRC, undated a,b). The second main aim of this SOP is to outline a procedure for the development of the ethical review expertise among the members of the Rhodes University Animal Research Ethics Committee (RUAREC) in terms of the knowledge and competencies to carry effective review and monitoring of research and teaching activities with the higher primates and to maintain the necessary standards of animal welfare by RU stakeholders.

## **2. Philosophy and practical implementation/execution of the SOP**

Philosophy of this SOP is derived from the principles of “*replacement, reduction, refinement and responsibility*”. Therefore the use of higher primates, as defined above, in research and teaching by RU stakeholders is only sanctioned and authorised, if no other alternatives are available to achieve the particular outcomes of research and teaching by RU stakeholders. These considerations must be based on a very careful weighing of risks and benefits of such as research and teaching activities involving higher primates. All uses of higher primates in any research and/or teaching activities, performed by or involving RU stakeholders, is to be based and done on working knowledge with the relevant South African and international norms and standards that govern working with higher primates and animals in general (see below); and based on input and in cooperation of animal welfare organisations, such as the National Council of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals (NCSPCA) and WESSA. In line with these facts, all activities in research and teaching by RU stakeholders with higher primates imply and are aimed at maintaining compliance and adherence to the following South African legislation and international standards that are aimed and protection of animal rights and welfare; and that take the specific consideration of higher primates into account:

- Animals Protection Act no. 17 of 1962 as amended
- Performing Animals Protection Act no. 24 of 1935 as amended
- SPCA Act no. 169 of 1993
- Animal Matters Amendment Act of 1993
- Animal Protection Amendment Bill of 2017
- South African National Standard no. 10379:2005
- Professional Code of Ethics of the African Association of Zoos and Aquaria
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, Available at: [www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php](http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php); website accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019).

The above-mentioned legislation and international standards and working knowledge of them ultimately must result in making the RU stakeholders and RUAREC members aware of the fact that sentience of higher primates must be considered to be the same or at least very similar, as that of human beings (UKMRC, undated a,b). Therefore the level of pain and distress that higher primates can and do experience during research and/or teaching, should be considered the same or very similar to the pain perception and distress that might/is experienced by human being during engagement in the same research/teaching activities conducted on higher primates. These considerations must form a strong and fundamental part of all unit operations of the animal ethics review process at Rhodes University, which involves higher primates.

Therefore, RUAREC must undertake their best efforts, in any and all research and teaching performed by RU stakeholders which involves higher primates, to adhere to the definition of animal welfare is defined as follows (SANS, 2005, page 5):

*“Provision of circumstances that contribute to wellbeing of the animal”.*

In addition, the same South African National Standard defines wellbeing as follows (SANS, 2005, page 5):

*“Homeostasis – tendency towards as relatively stable equilibrium between inter-dependent elements, especially as maintained by physiological and psychological processes “.*

Animal welfare of higher primates must further be seen to include the freedom from “thirst and hunger”, from “thermal and physical discomfort, pain, injury, distress” (SAAPAB, 2017). Unless otherwise stated in the text below, the following definitions for this SOP were extracted from section 1 of the Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act no. 19 of 1982 (as amended; this act is designated as the Act in further text of this SOP). These definitions are as follows:

*Veterinarian* – any person who is registered or deemed to be registered in terms of the Act to perform the veterinary profession of a veterinarian. In addition, a veterinarian must be registered in the appropriate register operated by the (see section 18 subsections/paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Act). An extract of the register signed by the Registrar of the South African Veterinary Council (established in terms of sections 2-17 of the Act) or a certified copy thereof should be provided to RUAREC and filed by the Ethics Coordinator for all the Veterinarians, who are trained and/or have experience in working with higher primates (referred to as specialised veterinarians in further text). The specialised veterinarians must provide a proof of experience of previous professional previous work/research experience with higher primates. The exact nature of the proof must be decided on by a majority of all RUAREC members in a regular or special committee meeting.

The specialised veterinarians must be involved in all research and teaching performed by or including the involvement of RU stakeholders, if such activities involve higher primates. The role of the specialised veterinarians is to monitor and ensure/protect the wellbeing and maintenance of homeostasis of higher primates in all the research and teaching activities with such higher primates that are performed by RU stakeholders. The sentience of higher primates into account in all such activities. It's not necessary for the specialised veterinarians to be (standing) members of RUAREC. However, RUAREC, through its Chairperson and the Ethics Coordinator, should make every efforts to maintain an ongoing engagement with the specialised veterinarians. This engagement is to be carried out in the form of activities such as workshops and/or lectures run by, or in collaboration with, the specialised veterinarians. The most fundamental aim of the engagement is to develop and keep up to date the knowledge and expertise of the RUAREC members in relation to the research and teaching involving higher primates. RUAREC and all RU stakeholders aim to achieve the fulfilment and maximum compliance with all South African and international regulations and guidelines for the research and teaching which involve the participation of higher primates, as defined above. To this effect, all academic units, institutes and/or laboratory facilities must make arrangements to have their facilities inspected for compliance with this SOP by a specialised veterinarian.

### 3. Competence monitoring about the skills among the RU stakeholders conducting research and teaching with higher primates

**No clinical trials or biomedical experiments that involve higher primates may take place in any facility on the Rhodes University campus**

Principal investigator or the responsible person of each facility involved in research and teaching must ensure that all relevant RU stakeholders, involved in work with animals in said facility, are trained in the following areas of academic endeavour:

- Basics and up-to-date standards of animal research ethics and specifically to work with higher primates;
- All procedures that are required to work with higher primates in said facility;
- RUAREC and the Rhodes University structure must undertake to facilitate the continuous education of RU stakeholders in up-to-date training in animal research ethics and research/teaching procedures with higher primates;
- **Research with higher primates should focus primarily on the ecological role played by higher primates in the food chains in South Africa, biodiversity protection, and land use management for sustainable development in South Africa and internationally;**
- **Research activities should be limited to observations of higher primates in their natural habitat, collection of faecal matter or evaluation of the dietary requirements of the higher primates under study;** any other proposed studies on higher primates must be vetted by the Chair of the RUAREC before ethical clearance is sought for the proposed study;
- Tissue sample collection must be done after consulting the state authority and the adherence to the species listed in Appendices I and II of CITES (Available at: [www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php](http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/text.php); website accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019);
- Records of such training are to be collated by the Ethics Coordinator, with assistance from Faculty and Departmental Representatives.

#### 4. References

- African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (ASZA, 2007). Professional code of ethics. *Operational document 2.13.2*, African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (South African non-profit organisation no. 034-450-NPO).
- Animal Matters Amendment Act of 1993 (1993-present). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.
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- Medical Research Council of the United Kingdom (UKMRC, undated a). The use of non-human primates in research: A working group report chaired by Sir David Weatherfall FRS FMedSci. The Medical Research Council of the United Kingdom, London, United Kingdom.
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- South African Veterinary and para-veterinary professions act no. 19 of 1982 as amended (SAVPVA, 2004-2007). Published in the South African Government Gazette as notice no. 26311 in 2004 and updated as notice no. 30184, South African Government Printing Works, Pretoria/Cape Town, South Africa.