



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
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## **RUAREC Standard Operating Procedure**

### **Animal Health Assessment by a Registered Veterinarian and Verification of Qualifications/Competencies to perform Procedures on Animals at Rhodes University**

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## **1. Background of this Standards 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).

These 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.

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 verification and ongoing active monitoring of the status of the animals that are used in research and teaching. In conjunction with this goes the need for competence and familiarity with the necessary procedure to handle animals properly. This need encompasses the activities carried out by the relevant RU stakeholders. Therefore this SOP is designed to achieve two aims. The

first one is to outline the procedure that is to be followed by all RU stakeholders with respect to the verification of the animal health status by a trained veterinarian who is registered with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC; see below for full details of the SAVC registration). Second aim is to outline a procedure for the verification and further development of the competencies to perform research and teaching activities with the animals and to maintain the necessary standards of animal welfare by RU stakeholders.

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

In addition to the above stated principles, RU stakeholders support the principles of “*replacement, reduction, refinement and responsibility*”. Therefore the use of animals as defined below is only sanctioned and authorised, if no other alternatives are available to achieve the particular outcomes of research and teaching. Such use of animals is done based on input and in cooperation of an animal welfare organisation(s). RUAREC has had on ongoing cooperation with 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 imply and are aimed at maintaining compliance and adherence to the following South African legislation and other standards that are aimed at protection of animal rights and welfare:

- South African National Standard no. 10386:2008
- 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
- South African National Standard no. 10379:2005
- Professional Code of Ethics of the African Association of Zoos and Aquaria

## **3. Definition of terms**

Based on examination of the standards, RUAREC has decided to stipulate the definition of an animal as follows (SANS, 2005, page 4):

“*Animal* – mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian insect or other multi-cellular organism that is not a plant or a fungus, to which the provisions of this standard apply”

In addition, the RUAREC also aims to undertake the best efforts to adhere to the definition of an animal, which proposed in the Animal Protection Amendment Bill in 2017 section 1b) and that states (SAAPAB, 2017):

*“Animal means any [equine, bovine, sheep, goat, pig, fowl, ostrich, dog, cat or other domestic animal or bird, or any wild animal, wild bird or reptile which is held in captivity or under the control of any person] –*

*a) live, non-human vertebrate such as a fish, amphibian, reptile, bird or mammal and includes*

*i) domestic, domesticated, feral and wild animals;*

*ii) a purpose-bred animal; and*

*iii) an animal bred for use in farming activities*

*b) higher invertebrate such as advanced members of Cephalopoda and Decapoda; or*

*c) a fertilised egg, foetus, or embryo of the a vertebrate referred to in paragraph a) or an invertebrate referred to in paragraph b)”.*

Animal welfare is defined as follows (SANS10386, 2008):

*“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 can further be seen as freedom “thirst and hunger”, from “thermal and physical discomfort, pain, injury, distress” (SAAPAB, 2017).

Unless otherwise stated in the text below, the following definitions are 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 members of RUAREC and/or who are performing the inspection of animal health and welfare, along with any and all related facilities.

#### **4. Execution of the SOP and practical implementation of the SOP based on defined terms**

RUAREC and all RU stakeholders aim to achieve the fulfilment and maximum compliance with the definitions of animal welfare in research and teaching; and in all activities at Rhodes University that involve animals, 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 registered veterinarian. A minimum of one, but preferably two registered veterinarians must be recruited by the Chairperson of the RUAREC for the verification of animal welfare in research and teaching by RU stakeholders. All such veterinarians must provide an extract from the register of veterinarians which is signed by the Registrar of the SAVC, or a certified copy thereof which is not older than 3 months to Rhodes University. Such extracts or certified copies thereof must be filed with the Ethics Coordinator (currently Mr. Siyanda Manqele, email: [s.mangele@ru.ac.za](mailto:s.mangele@ru.ac.za)).

The Chairperson of RUAREC, in support by the Ethics Coordinator and by members of RUAREC, must compile a database of all RU stakeholders who house animals for research and teaching. Principal investigator or a responsible person must be listed in such a database for each of the facilities/RU stakeholders. Their contact information must be available to the Chairperson of RUAREC, the Ethics Coordinator, and the recruited registered veterinarians. Once the database is compiled, the Chairperson of the RUAREC, in collaboration with principal investigator or a responsible person must be listed in such a database for each of the facilities/RU stakeholders and the recruited veterinarian(s) will compile a roster for the weekly inspections of all facilities/RU stakeholders. The database and the roster must be compiled within three months of the date that this SOP has come into effect.

The inspection of animal welfare in all facilities/RU stakeholders will begin once the database and roster have been compiled. The time and date must be specified for each inspection in each of the facilities/RU stakeholders. The present persons must be the principal investigator/responsible person, a member of the RUAREC and the recruited veterinarian(s). A log

book must be kept at each of the facilities/RU stakeholders with the time and date of each inspection. The log book must be signed by the veterinarian, principal investigator, or responsible person; and the RUAREC member on each day. Any problems or concerns must be recorded and the remedial action specified. Time frame should be set by agreement about removing any non-compliance perceived or determined by the recruited registered veterinarian.

Twice a year, reports about the inspections and compliance monitoring by the recruited and registered veterinarian must be tabled as agenda items during RUAREC meetings. These reports must be prepared by the Ethics Coordinator and the Chairperson of the RUAREC. Reports are to be discussed in the RUAREC meeting among the committee members. The findings of the veterinarian monitoring and the reports, as well as the RUAREC discussions about them, are to be seen and used as a learning experience about animal ethics among the RUAREC members.

## **5. Competence monitoring about the skills among the RU stakeholders conducting research and teaching**

Principal investigator or 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;
- All procedures that are required to work with animals in said facility;
- Trials of procedure on animals are tested on substitute models, e.g. dead animal tissue, first before the procedure is actually performed on live animals;
- 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 animals;
- Records such training are to be collated by the Ethics Coordinator, with assistance from Faculty and Departmental Representatives.

## 6. 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.

Animals Protection Act no. 17 of 1962 as amended (1962-2007). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

Performing Animals Protection Act no. 24 of 1935 as amended (1935-present). Government of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

South African Bureau of Standards/Standards South Africa (SANS, 2005). South African National Standard 10379:2005. Standards South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

South African Animal Protection Amendment Bill (SAAPAB, 2017). Published in the South African Government Gazette as notice no. 41289 in 2017, South African Government Printing Works, Pretoria/Cape Town, South Africa.

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.