

## **POLICY ON THE ANIMAL CARE AND USE PROGRAMME**

### **Preamble**

Against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care, taking into consideration international conventions and legislation pertaining to the promotion of animal welfare, the Council of the North-West University (NWU) has adopted this policy on 9 September 2021.

### **1 Interpretation and application**

This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the –

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.2 Animal Protection Act, 71 of 1962;
- 1.3 Animal Disease Act, 35 of 1984;
- 1.4 Veterinary & Para-Veterinary Professions Act, 19 of 1982;
- 1.5 Natural Scientific Professions Act, 27 of 2003;
- 1.6 Standards Act, 8 of 2008;
- 1.7 National Health Act, 61 of 2003;
- 1.8 Guidelines on Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH2015 or latest version);
- 1.9 South African National Standard: The Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (SANS-10386, 2008 or latest version);
- 1.10 Statute of the North-West University (2020) ('the Statute'); and
- 1.11 all related policies of the NWU, with special reference to the Research Ethics Policy, Code of Conduct for all researchers, and Terms of Reference for Management of Research Ethics of the NWU.
- 1.12 The NWU guidelines for the Animal Care and Use Programme as Appendix to this Policy, must kept current by the Senate Committee for Research Ethics (SCRE).

### **2 Definitions**

In this policy –

**“animal”** means any vertebrate or higher invertebrate animal, or any other protected lower invertebrate species;

**the “Animal Care and Use Programme”** refers to the programme adopted by the SCRE for the purposes of oversight of all aspects of the use and care of animals in the research environment of the NWU, including the care and management of feral animals;

**the “Animal Ethics Committee” (AEC)** refers to the committee responsible for managing the implementation of the Animal Care and Use Programme;

**an “Animal (research) Ethics Committee” (AREC)** refers to a formally appointed committee responsible to oversee all aspects of ethical conduct in care and use of animals, including review, approval, monitoring and inspection;

**“animal research facility”** means any infrastructure where animals are housed and used for scientific purposes;

**“animal welfare”** means the extent to which the species-specific physiological and psychosocial needs of an animal are met;

**“authorised institutional official”** (AIO) is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation;

**“biological safety”** (biosafety) refers to practices, procedures and proper use of facilities and equipment, in order to assure the safe handling, storage and disposal of, or prevention of contamination with (potentially) hazardous biological matter (including pathogens and their products, toxins, biotechnology);

**“biosecurity”**, applied in concert with biosafety, refers to measures to protect against the inadvertent, inappropriate, intentional and malevolent use of (potentially) hazardous biological material;

**“feral and wild animals”** means any animal that freely roams or lives on University property.

### 3 Policy statement

It is the policy of the NWU to –

- 3.1 Ensure that animal care and use conform to ethical sound, accountable and responsible practices in its premises and by its employees, including compliance with the demands of scientific integrity, the safety of humans, the welfare of animals and the protection of the integrity of the environment;
- 3.2 foster a culture of care towards animals by appropriately empowering management and employees by means of the promotion of awareness, training, competence, respect and communication, and by ensuring the establishment and maintenance of appropriate infrastructure.

### 4 Purposes the animal care and use programme

The Animal Care and Use Programme, including the guidelines associated with this policy, must serve the purpose of –

- 4.1 ensuring legal and ethical compliance related to animal care and use at the NWU;
- 4.2 ensuring proper line of authority and communication, management and oversight structures, animal facilities and other infrastructures management, staff training and empowerment, and public engagement to ensure responsible and transparent oversight of all decisions and activities related to animals at the university and elsewhere where employees and students of the NWU are involved;
- 4.3 promoting a culture of care and respect towards animals, including compliance with sound ethical principles in decision making and action by management, employees and students;
- 4.4 assessing and managing risk, as well as assuring human safety, animal wellbeing and environmental integrity, including to pro-actively and actively –
  - 4.4.1 ensure responsible care, welfare management and disaster management plans for all animals on NWU properties, including animals housed and used for scientific purposes, wild and feral animals living on NWU property or on private agricultural or game farms and national parks used by NWU employees and students for scientific purposes;
  - 4.4.2 warrant safe environments, protection and proper training and empowerment of researchers, postgraduate students and employees involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes;
  - 4.4.3 ensure proper oversight and procedures that protect wildlife and the environment;
  - 4.4.4 be responsive to public responsibility and to promote appropriate, transparent public engagement.
- 4.5 The Animal Care and Use Programme must provide programme guidelines, and contain an addendum, kept current, in the form of a directory listing and outlining all animal facilities, animal research ethics committees (SRECs), the animal ethics committee (AEC) and other stakeholders responsible for managing the implementation of the Programme, and information on where relevant Terms of Reference

documents, Standard Operating Procedure documents, and disaster management plans can be accessed.

## **5 Responsibilities and accountability**

- 5.1 The AIO bears the ultimate responsibility and accountability for the animal care and use programme, and reports to the SCRE and the University Management Committee (UMC) after consultation with the relevant ARECs, AEC and the animal research facilities in this regards.
- 5.2 The SCRE, is responsible to oversee, with the assistance of Animal Research Ethics Committees (ARECs), all ethical aspects regarding the use of animals for research purposes, as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy.
- 5.3 Line managers, including the relevant executive deans, deputy deans, directors and facility managers, are responsible for ensuring the empowerment and training of employees, the management and maintenance of animal facilities, safeguarding proper disaster management plans, and management of off-campus and collaborative research involving animals.
- 5.4 The animal facility managers referred to in 5.3 and attending veterinarians are responsible for managing and implementing the relevant Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures related to animal welfare as well as communicating needs and challenges to line managers and must report animal use to the applicable AREC or AEC.
- 5.5 ARECs are accountable to SCRE in accordance with the Terms of Reference for Management of Research Ethics, and must, if duly registered for the purpose, also report to the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC).
- 5.6 ARECs are required to inspect animal facilities and are responsible for the review, monitoring, approval and post-approval of active and passive studies involving animals.
- 5.7 The AEC is responsible for overseeing the care and management of feral animals.
- 5.8 Support Services
  - 5.8.1 the Occupational Safety Department and Occupations Healthcare are responsible for relevant occupational safety of employees in the workplace, including biological safety and security.
  - 5.8.2 Protection Services are responsible for relevant security matters in the workplace.
  - 5.8.3 Physical Infrastructure and Planning are responsible for maintenance of relevant infrastructure.
  - 5.8.4 Corporate Relations and Marketing are responsible for sound, appropriately transparent public engagement on animal care and use.
  - 5.8.5 Information Technology (IT) support services and Electric and Electronic Services are responsible for providing and supporting relevant electronic platforms.
  - 5.8.6 The Legal Office is responsible to assist with relevant legal matters, including with multi-institutional collaboration where memoranda of agreement between the ARECs of the respective institutions may be required for animal facility oversight, student support and supervision of animal work at a non-NWU animal facility.
- 5.9 Researchers (including postgraduate students) are accountable for responsible study and student management, as well as compliance with the Code of Conduct of the NWU applicable for all researchers, compliance with the SANS-10386 referred to in 1.9 above, and in case of health and health-related research, for compliance with the DoH2015 referred to in 1.8 above.