

## **Adoption of Research Animals – ACLAM Position Statement**

**October 2017**

### **I. Position statement:**

The American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM) fully supports the concept of adoption of healthy, post-study, research animals into long-term, caring private homes or farms that can provide appropriate and humane living conditions for these animals as pets. The development of an institutionally-formulated and administered adoption policy is strongly encouraged. Adoption of research animals is valued by the public, laboratory animal professionals, and the entire research community.<sup>1</sup>

### **II. Introduction/Background:**

As an organization comprised of veterinary professionals skilled in laboratory animal health and welfare, ACLAM believes that it is essential for the Attending Veterinarian to be involved in the development and oversight of the institution's adoption program. While many research institutions already have adoption programs and policies in place, most applicable regulations do not address the concept of private adoption of research animals.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Given that the United States Department of Agriculture's Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations recordkeeping regulations do offer institutions the option of adoption<sup>5</sup> and the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW)<sup>6</sup> also supports this practice, additional guidance from ACLAM may be beneficial.

### **III. Factors to consider when formulating adoption policies and determining if research animals are eligible for adoption.**

- An institutional adoption policy must take into consideration all applicable state and local laws related to animal transfer. Obtaining legal advice for the development of an adoption policy is recommended.
- Collaborations with outside placement groups should only occur after careful review of the group's mission statement, reputation, history of involvement with animal adoption, and criminal history. Background checks are strongly recommended.<sup>7</sup>
- Adoption should require the approval of the Attending Veterinarian or designee, who should also be responsible for oversight of the program. Institutions may want to add additional levels of review; e.g., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Institutional Official, or others, as applicable.
- The institution should determine which species are appropriate for adoption, based upon the institution's research scope, legal considerations, biosecurity issues, and species' suitability as pets.
- Animals should be adopted as permanent pets. Post-adoption transfer should be discouraged.
- It is recommended that adopters be carefully reviewed and selected, given the intent for each adoption to be permanent and that adopters have appropriate living space for the animal. Adopters should be willing and able to accept responsibility, in writing, for the life-long care of

animals released to them by research institutions, to include future preventive and emergency veterinary care.

- When appropriate, the institution should vaccinate and spay/neuter animals prior to adoption to reduce the potential for future liability to the institution.
- The institution should determine whether the animal's health and behavior make them suitable candidates for adoption. Major surgical procedures and prior administration of experimental compounds don't necessarily preclude animals from being offered for adoption. This decision should be based on the animal's current health status and long-term prognosis, in addition to potential safety concerns for adopters. Adopters must be informed of potential animal health concerns during the review process and should be provided with the health history of the animal upon transfer.
- Genetically modified animals (GMA) are not necessarily excluded from adoption, however applicable guidelines must be reviewed and followed to ensure compliance with regulatory guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV. References

1. Carbone L, Guanzini L, McDonald C (2003). Adoption Options for Laboratory Animals. *Lab Animal*, 32(9): 37-41.
2. National Research Council (2011). *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. National Academy Press: Washington, D.C.
3. Federation of Animal Science Societies (2010). *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching*. Champaign, IL: FASS, Federation of Animal Science Societies.
4. PHS (Public Health Service) (1996) Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [PL 99-158. Health Research Extension Act, 1985].
5. CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 2008. Title 9, Animals and Animal Products, Subchapter A (Animal Welfare). Washington, D.C.: Office of Federal Register.
6. Frequently Asked Questions: PHS policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/faqs.htm#675>
7. Sancenito J (2014). Don't Get Bitten by Your Research Animal Adoption Program. *Laboratory Animal Science Professional*, December: 29-30.
8. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health (2016). NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules.