Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Handbook for Principal Investigators

This handbook outlines key responsibilities and expectations for Principal Investigators conducting animal activities under an approved UNT IACUC protocol.

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1. PI Responsibilities

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that all animal activities are conducted in accordance with IACUC approval, institutional policies, and applicable regulations. The PI is accountable for protocol submission and maintenance, personnel training and supervision, communication with the IACUC Office and veterinary staff, reporting of animal welfare concerns and compliance issues, implementation of appropriate safety practices, and preparation for inspections. Although students and research staff may perform much of the day-to-day work, responsibility and accountability for all activities conducted under the protocol remain with the PI.

- The PI is ultimately responsible for all activities conducted under the approved protocol, including those performed by students, staff, volunteers, and collaborators, and must ensure all work is conducted in accordance with IACUC approval and applicable regulations.
- The PI must provide appropriate oversight, training, and supervision to ensure personnel are qualified to perform assigned procedures and understand protocol requirements, including approved procedures, animal numbers, study endpoints, monitoring requirements, and post-approval conditions.
- The PI is responsible for ensuring all personnel have access to the current IACUC-approved protocol and any approved amendments and are informed of any changes to approved procedures.
- The PI should foster an environment in which personnel seek assistance and ask questions whenever they are uncertain about procedures, animal welfare concerns, or compliance requirements.

2. Protocol Submission and Review

- Submit new protocols at least 3 weeks before the scheduled IACUC meeting.
- Respond to IACUC requests for clarification, modifications, or additional information within 5 business days whenever possible to avoid review delays.

3. Protocol Lifecycle Requirements

- Submit amendments before implementing any change to approved activities.
- Submit annual reports as required.
- Submit a 3-year protocol renewal before protocol expiration. The IACUC Office may provide courtesy reminders; however, the PI remains responsible for timely submission.
- Submit a final closure report when all animal work has ended.

4. Training Requirements

- The PI must ensure all personnel have access to the current approved protocol and understand the procedures they are authorized to perform.
- Personnel must be trained and demonstrate competency in approved procedures before performing them independently and must review the current approved protocol and any approved amendments before engaging in animal activities.
- Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and CITI training requirements must be completed by the PI and all protocol personnel before protocol (or amendment) can be approved.
- The PI is responsible for ensuring all personnel complete required institutional training and receive protocol-specific training appropriate to their assigned responsibilities.

- The PI must ensure personnel know how and when to obtain assistance regarding animal care, veterinary concerns, occupational health and safety, biosafety, animal welfare, emergencies, and regulatory compliance.

5. Animal Welfare, Veterinary Care, and Reporting Requirements

- The PI is responsible for ensuring that animal health concerns are promptly recognized and reported.
- The PI and all personnel must notify veterinary staff immediately when an animal experiences illness, injury, unexpected pain or distress, adverse post-procedural outcomes, or any condition requiring veterinary assessment.
- The PI is responsible for promptly reporting unanticipated animal-related events, unexpected mortality, protocol deviations affecting animals, or other significant animal welfare issues to the IACUC Office and/or Attending Veterinarian as appropriate.
- All personnel working under the protocol must be trained on when and how to contact veterinary staff and report concerns.
- Concerns regarding animal care and use, animal health, environmental conditions, animal welfare, incidents, or potential noncompliance must be reported promptly. UNT permits reports to be made without identifying the reporter and will protect the privacy of individuals reporting concerns to the maximum extent possible.
- Reports may be made to the IACUC Office, Research Integrity and Compliance, the Attending Veterinarian, or through the UNT Trust Line. All reports are reviewed by the UNT Denton IACUC and investigated when warranted to determine appropriate corrective actions.
- Prompt reporting of concerns is a professional and regulatory responsibility and supports both animal welfare and institutional compliance.

6. Field Research & Working with Wildlife

- PIs are required to obtain and maintain active permits from local, state, and federal authorities for working with wildlife. These permits must list the species and activities covered in their IACUC-approved protocol as well as the names of personnel who are authorized to do the work. The IACUC will request copies of these permits.
- If work is taking place in a state or local park, nature reserve, or other similar location a letter from the site authority addressed to the PI granting permission for the work must be submitted to the IACUC.
- Protocols/amendments will not be approved until appropriate permits and authorization letters have been provided.

7. Chemical Safety and Biosafety Responsibilities

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that all hazardous materials used under an animal use protocol are handled safely and in compliance with UNT policies and applicable regulations.

Chemical Safety

- Prior to using hazardous chemicals in animal research activities, the PI must ensure that all required chemical safety approvals and reviews have been completed.
- The PI is responsible for consulting with Risk Management Services (RMS)/Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) regarding chemical hazards, exposure controls, storage requirements, waste disposal procedures, and other safety considerations.
- The PI must ensure personnel receive appropriate training on the safe use, handling, storage, and disposal of chemicals.
- The PI must ensure that appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is available, properly maintained, and used by personnel as required by hazard assessments.
- Safety Data Sheets (SDS) must be readily accessible to personnel, and all staff must know how to obtain safety information for chemicals used in the laboratory or animal facility.
- Chemical waste must be managed and disposed of in accordance with UNT and EHS requirements.
- DEA licenses must be maintained and DEA regulations followed for the use of controlled substances.

Biosafety

- Research involving biological agents, recombinant or synthetic nucleic acids, human-derived materials, infectious agents, or other biohazards may require review and approval by the Biological Safety Officer (BSO) and/or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) before work begins.
- The PI is responsible for contacting the Biological Safety Officer to determine applicable biosafety requirements and obtain any necessary approvals.
- The PI must ensure that personnel are trained in biosafety practices and comply with approved containment, handling, transport, decontamination, and waste disposal procedures.
- Appropriate PPE, engineering controls, and containment practices must be implemented and maintained based on risk assessment and approved biosafety procedures.
- Any spill, exposure, containment breach, or other biosafety incident must be reported promptly in accordance with institutional requirements.

PI Accountability

- The PI remains responsible for ensuring that chemical and biological hazards associated with animal research are appropriately evaluated, approved, communicated, and controlled.
- Responsibility for compliance cannot be delegated to students or research staff, even when they perform the day-to-day work.
- The PI must ensure that all personnel understand applicable chemical safety and biosafety requirements before participating in protocol activities.

Key Principle: Before introducing a hazardous chemical, biological agent, recombinant material, infectious material, or other regulated substance into an animal study, investigators should consult the appropriate UNT safety office (RMS/EHS or the BSO) to ensure all necessary approvals, training, PPE requirements, handling procedures, and disposal methods are in place.

8. Inspection Readiness and Checklist

- Animal facilities and laboratories are inspected by the IACUC at least semiannually.
- Current health check, feeding, cleaning, and environmental monitoring logs are complete and available.
- Animal housing is labeled with the correct protocol number.
- All chemicals, solutions, and drugs are properly labeled and include expiration dates when applicable.
- No expired drugs, reagents, feed, supplies, or other products are present.
- Safety information (e.g., SDS) is available for all chemicals and substances, and personnel know how to access it.
- Controlled substances are logged, stored, and disposed of according to DEA regulations.
- All surfaces cleanable and sanitizable.

9. Available Resources

- Assistance is available from the IACUC Office, facility manager, attending veterinarian, and veterinary staff.
- Personnel should seek guidance whenever questions arise regarding animal welfare, procedures, training, or compliance requirements.

10. Key Takeaway

Although students and research staff may perform much of the day-to-day work, the Principal Investigator retains responsibility and accountability for all activities conducted under the protocol.

This handbook is intended as guidance only and does not replace UNT Policy 13.001 or applicable federal regulations. In the event of a conflict, official policy and sponsor requirements govern.

Appendix A: Important Contacts and Resources

Print this table, fill in your contact information and laboratory manager contact information (if applicable) and distribute it to your students and personnel.

Resource	Contact Name	Phone Number
Principal Investigator		
Laboratory Manager (if applicable)		
Facility Manager	Dr. Imelda Norton	(817) 403-8083
Attending Veterinarian	Dr. Egeenee Daniels	(817) 929-4053
IACUC Office	UNT IACUC	(940) 369-8374
IACUC Chair	Dr. Edward Mager	(940) 369-8392
Research Integrity and Compliance	ORIC	(940) 565-4643
Biosafety Officer	Mohammad Khan, MS, RBP (ABSA)	(940) 369-7638
Risk Management Services / EHS	Jordan Murray	(940) 565-2109
Emergency After-Hours Animal Care Contact	Dr. Egeenee Daniels Dr. Imelda Norton	(817) 735-2017 (817) 403-8083
UNT Trust Line (Compliance and Ethics)	Anonymous Reporting	1-877-606-9187