



European College of Veterinary Surgeons

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ECVS ETHICAL GUIDELINES:

Humane Care and Use of Animals

The European College of Veterinary Surgeons, recognising its responsibility, promotes high-quality and humane care of animals whether for companionship, agricultural use, sporting events, teaching, or research. The use of animals in teaching and research is viewed as a unique privilege with inherent responsibilities and not as an absolute right. Advances in surgical and medical care of animals and people requires research which must at times involve the use of animals. Laboratory animals serve an important role in these essential teaching and research efforts, but their use must be justified and their humane care ensured by teachers, scientists and local peer review ethical committees (for more information please look at the website for the European College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ECLAM) (<https://eclam.eu>). Alternatives to the use of live animals should always be considered and animal use reserved for those times when acceptable alternatives are not available. The use of animals, whether for teaching, basic research, or clinical trials, must be carefully scrutinised to ensure that meaningful results are obtained for the benefit of animal or human health. It is advisable that correct statistical analysis such as a sample size calculation is performed prior to starting the experiment to ensure the correct numbers of animals are used to allow sufficient power for the planned experiment using the 3Rs (reduction / replacement / refinement) (<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/who-we-are/3rs>) (<https://www.syrclle.network/systematic-review-training-documents>).

To help achieve these goals, the following guidelines are established:

A. Care of Individual Animals

1. The ECVS endorses guidelines set forth by the governments of the European Union (EU) regarding welfare, care and use of animals in teaching, research and agriculture. Husbandry of animals used should follow the guidelines established by the governments of the EU and should be according to the highest scientific standards of humane care for animals.
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747131](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747131)
2. Techniques for euthanasia should follow guidelines established by the individual Diplomates' regulatory body and/or as directed by Directive 2010/63/EU (Annex IV) for laboratory animals.

B. Diplomates' Responsibility

1. Diplomates should follow the guidelines set forth by their governments and the EU regarding welfare, care and use of animals in teaching, research and agriculture.
2. Diplomates at educational and research institutions should encourage and assist their institutions in becoming accredited by the national groups for Accreditation of Laboratory Animals, where these institutions exist (<https://www.aaalac.org>)
3. Diplomates at educational and research institutions should assist in the development of a local research ethics committee (REC). Diplomates should take a leadership role in establishing and reviewing humane protocols for animal use for research or teaching purposes. Diplomates must ensure they are fully conversant with both national (local) and European legislation concerning animal use and that they uphold [ECVS Code of Professional Conduct](#).
4. Diplomates should always consider alternative methods of teaching and research which do not require the use of living animals and always consider the use of 3Rs if using any animals in research. For example
 - a. Basic surgical techniques, such as aseptic preparation, instrument handling, knot tying and suturing, should be taught using artificial material, simulated audio-visual instruction or cadavers before surgical trainees engage in exercises using living animals.
 - b. Wherever possible, simulated models should be used to teach fundamental techniques of surgical procedures such as fracture repair.
 - c. The number of teaching laboratories using living animals should be kept to a minimum and the exercises selected to maximise the principles of a surgical procedure rather than specific techniques.
5. Diplomates will promote a sensitivity and concern among students, interns and residents of the need for humane care and treatment of animals at all times.
6. Where live animals are used, non-survival teaching laboratories, in which the animal is anaesthetised, does not regain consciousness, and is humanely killed at the conclusion of the laboratory, are recommended. Survival teaching or research procedures can be justified only if the learning experience of the student/research is materially enhanced and the knowledge gained cannot reasonably be obtained in any other way.
7. In the rare situation where survival is approved after a teaching or research surgical procedure, it is the responsibility of the Diplomate to ensure directly that the animals are cared for in a humane and conscientious manner, documenting diligent attention to post operative management and analgesia.

C. Responsibility of the College

1. The ECVS accepts the obligation to remain current on all matters concerning ethical and moral issues of animal usage and to keep the members educated of alternatives to animal use and of the laws pertaining to animal use.
3. The programme committee of meetings sponsored by the ECVS shall carefully scrutinise all submitted abstracts for appropriate and humane care of animals and shall only accept those for presentation that follow the government guidelines and the Animal Welfare Acts of the EU.
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747131](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747131)
4. The ECVS, through its affiliation with Veterinary Surgery, shall not publish any manuscript in which the materials and methods are not consistent with government guidelines and the Animal Welfare Acts of the EU.
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)747131](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)747131)
2. The ECVS, through its Research Committee, shall fund research only at institutions which have accreditation by the national groups for use of laboratory animals or which follow government guidelines and has ethical approval from a REC. Each proposal submitted for consideration must contain a statement, signed by the Diplomat investigator (or co-investigator), that this requirement has been met.
3. If a member of the public, colleague or another Diplomat has a concern about a ECVS Diplomat's treatment of animals, they should consult the [ECVS Complaints and Grievance procedure](#). While the College supports and encourages the implementation of the government guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals, it is not responsible for the action of individual members.