

IACUC Policy: Photography, Videography, and Recording of Animals

Purpose/Scope/Application

This policy outlines requirements for photography, video, and audio recording and live streaming of animals used in research or teaching, and in any area where animals are housed, tested, or transported at the University of Minnesota, including field study locations owned by the University. It applies to all personnel, including RAR, PIs, lab staff, students, IACUC members, and visitors.

All images and recordings may be subject to public records requests under Minnesota and federal law. As a public, federally funded institution, any non-proprietary data must be released upon official request.

Definition

Animal: For purposes of this policy, animal refers to any animal covered by [UMN Board of Regents Policy: Animal Care and Use](#), including those used for research, teaching or display, whether live or dead, and recognizable parts of these animals. Images of excised tissues or tumors separate from the animal, microscopic imaging, and medical imaging are excluded from this policy.

Acceptable Use of Photography/Videography/Recording

The use of digital recording devices - smart phones, digital cameras, sound recorders, or similar; analog recording methods such as photos on film, cassette tapes or VHS tapes; live streaming of any animals or workspaces while animals are present - to capture, record, or transmit images or sounds of animals or animal use areas is allowed in the following circumstances:

- When performed by the PI or designee for University-sanctioned scientific reasons (e.g., data collection, scientific publications or presentations, laboratory documentation).
 - This must be outlined in the relevant IACUC protocol.
- When performed by the PI, course director or designee for the purpose of recording instructional activities, judging contests, student club activities and marketing purposes.
 - This must be outlined in the relevant IACUC protocol.
 - For media/outreach uses, personnel are also strongly encouraged to work with the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) Communications Department (riocomm@umn.edu) and, if necessary, the University's Legal Counsel.
- When performed by or at the direction of the Attending Veterinarian (AV) or Research Animal Resources (RAR) Veterinary Services for the purpose of monitoring animal health or diagnosing or documenting clinical disease, veterinary care, or treatment.



- When performed by IACUC members or IACUC office staff to document conditions during IACUC mandated inspections.
- When performed by government inspectors (e.g. USDA Veterinary Medical Officer).

Other Circumstances

Photography, videography or recording of animals or animal areas may be approved in other circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Requests should be made to the IACUC Office for review by IACUC Leadership. Consultation with other parties, such as RAR, departments or the Office of General Counsel, may be needed. Examples of other circumstances include:

- Documentation of equipment or facilities that need repair.
 - If the situation is not an emergency, please contact an appropriate stakeholder prior to taking photos (e.g. if in RAR housing space contact RAR animal care, veterinary care, or facility management). If there is an emergency that puts animal or human safety at risk do not take pictures but rather call appropriate emergency phone numbers.
 - Photos, video, or audio recording should only be taken at the request of the contacted stakeholder and as instructed. In these cases, animals should be excluded from such images, unless it is unavoidable to capture the requested data.
- Documentation of animal welfare concerns or complaints.
 - Potential immediate threats to animal health or welfare should be reported to the RAR Emergency Veterinarian on call rather than taking photos.

Guidelines for Content

- Capture only as much of an image or field of view as needed for the purpose.
- Appropriate safety, handling, and restraint methods for the species should be shown.
- Show appropriate and accurate context (e.g., methods of restraint or handling, anesthetics, appropriate personal protective equipment).
- Avoid unintentional references to the University of Minnesota or other identifying details. Pay attention to the background and avoid capturing building or room signage, cage cards, staff badges, or similar identifiers.
- Individuals must be informed in advance if photography or recording is planned. Anyone may decline being photographed, filmed, or recorded and cannot be required to participate.
- Photographs and recordings of animals may be subject to public records requests under Minnesota's Government Data Practices Act (DPA) or the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), making them accessible to the public. Always be mindful of this when capturing or handling such media.



Guidelines for Data Collection and Storage

- Use of personal devices (e.g., cell phones) for recording is strongly discouraged, as data collected in a University role on personal devices are still subject to open records requests. A dedicated lab device is preferred to avoid duplication, distribution, or retention by former staff. Recordings should be promptly transferred to a secured UMN drive and not stored long-term on the recording device, personal cloud storage, or any unsecured storage.
- Images should not be shared via email, social media, or external file-sharing services. If sharing is necessary for scientific or teaching purposes, a UMN Box drive is recommended.
- Files should be deleted as soon as they are no longer needed for the approved purpose.

Careless use of recordings of animals or from animal use areas can misrepresent activities and expose the University, employees, or students to unwanted attention or harassment. Consider having students and visitors read and sign a form stating they understand and will adhere to this policy before entering animal use areas or participating in related activities. Consider adding this policy to departmental or course-specific policies or agreements.

Related Documents

- [Board of Regents Policy on Animal Care and Use](#)
- [UMN Data Access and Privacy Office](#) website