



Policy on Use of Sedatives, Analgesics, and Anesthetics in Animals Used in Research and Teaching

Policy: Animals that may experience more than momentary or slight pain or distress require appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anesthesia unless there are suitable scientific justifications. Assessment of pain and distress in animals is difficult and can be subjective. As such, procedures that cause pain or distress in humans should be assumed to cause similar affects in animals, unless the contrary is established. The attending veterinarian has the authority to ensure the provision of adequate sedation, analgesia, or anesthesia.

1. Role of the Investigator

When animals may experience more than momentary or slight pain or distress, the investigator must provide in the animal care and use protocol a detailed description of how pain or distress will be assessed and how agents will be used to alleviate pain and distress. When animals are subjected to major survival surgery, routine provision of postsurgical analgesia is required. If the investigator feels it necessary to withhold sedatives, analgesics, or anesthetics or deviate from the recommendations of the veterinary staff, the investigator must provide the IACUC a reasoned, scientific justification for this action. The justification should include the rationale or evidence that the agents would compromise the scientific aspects of the research protocol. Investigators are highly encouraged to consult with the veterinary staff during the course of protocol planning to reach agreement concerning appropriate use of drugs for control of pain and distress.

2. Role of the Division of Animal Resources (DAR) and Clinical Veterinary Staff

The proposed methods and use of agents to prevent or alleviate pain or distress in experimental animals must meet the approval of the veterinary staff. The DAR veterinary staff will review animal care and use protocols to determine that proposed methods and agents for anesthesia and analgesia are appropriate. To this end, the veterinarians consult with investigators as needed to arrive at appropriate methods of treatment that meet the clinical needs of the animals and do not compromise the scientific integrity of the experiments.

In the event of unanticipated pain or distress that is protocol-associated or arises from spontaneous illness or injury, the clinical veterinarian attending to the animal(s) is responsible for determining the cause of pain and instituting ameliorative therapy consistent with established veterinary medical and nursing procedures. The Institutional Veterinarian has authority to make independent emergency decisions concerning the treatment regimen of animals experiencing unalleviated pain or suffering. This authority is delegated to clinical veterinarians attending to animals under the auspices of the UIUC animal care and use program. Such animals must be provided appropriate veterinary care or be humanely euthanized, unless this is in direct conflict with experiment goals that have been previously described in a protocol approved by the IACUC. Whenever possible, the investigator is consulted prior to initiating treatment or euthanasia. In all cases, however, the welfare of the animal will be the primary consideration.

3. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Oversight

The IACUC has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that pain and distress in research animals is limited to that which is necessary in the course of approved experimentation. This includes review and approval of methods and agents used for prevention and alleviation of pain and distress. Committee decisions in this regard will be based on regulatory requirements as well as advice from the veterinary staff and the investigators. The IACUC will periodically review (at least every 3 years) protocols that involve pain or distress. The review will specifically assess methods and agents being used and deviations (if any) from this policy.

Reference(s):

- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, NRC, 1996
- Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching, FASS, 1999
- Animal Welfare Regulations, 9 CFR, chapter I, subchapter A
- U.S. Government Principles for the Care and Use of Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training, 1983

Approved 12/3/98

Revision approved: 3/6/01