



## GUIDELINES FOR EUTHANASIA OF WILDLIFE SPECIES

*Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)*

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

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Because of the variety of conditions under which euthanasia of free-ranging wildlife may need to be conducted, the choice of the most humane method will vary by species, situation, and individual animal. Since a euthanasia plan is required, even if euthanasia is not the intended outcome, investigators are encouraged to consult with veterinarians with species-relevant experience and relevant professional society guidelines when preparing the design of a field study. The overall goal should be to minimize animal distress and pain, as well as emotional impact and physical risks to personnel. The IACUC will in most cases defer to guidelines published by professional societies where implementation of any of the following guidelines is impractical, but any request to deviate from these guidelines must be specifically justified.

The AVMA lists the following methods, provided the practitioner is specifically trained:

- Acceptable:
  - Chemical: Chemical methods of euthanasia that are listed as acceptable for domestic animals or captive wildlife are applicable to free-ranging wildlife. Premedication with an injectable or inhaled agent may reduce animal distress and/or human safety risks, under some circumstances.
  - Physical methods: Cervical dislocation or decapitation of small animals is acceptable.
- Acceptable with Conditions:
  - Inhalation: Inhaled agents, which are classified as being acceptable with conditions for domestic animals, are also acceptable, with similar conditions, for euthanasia of free-ranging wildlife. Animals must be small enough to be placed in a sealed container. Larger species may be restrained for face-mask administration, when animal distress associated with restraint can be minimized.
  - Physical methods: Gunshot is acceptable with conditions for euthanasia of free-ranging, captured, or confined wildlife, provided that bullet placement is targeted to the head (to destroy the brain) when possible, and provided the practitioner is properly licensed and trained.

To ensure the death of animals that are anesthetized or otherwise unconscious, potassium chloride (intravenous or intracardiac), exsanguination, cervical dislocation or decapitation, and thoracic compression may be used.

### **References**

AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition. American Veterinary Medical Association, Schaumburg, IL. 2013.  
Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. 2011.

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