

Document Name	Policy on Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents
Document Number	ACC.POL.014
Origin	Research Office Committee on Animal Use and Welfare (CAUW)
Authority	Vice-President Academic and Provost
Effective Date	October 2023
Review/Retirement Date	2026
Responsibility for Revision	Research Ethics and Compliance Officer
Responsibility for Implementation	Associate Vice-President Research

1) Purpose & Responsibilities

As a certified institution of the [Canadian Council on Animal Care](#) (CCAC), Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) is required to have a policy for the reporting and escalation of animal welfare incidents, as outlined in the CCAC's policy on '[Certification Of Animal Ethics And Care Programs](#)' document and associated [FAQ](#).

The Policy for Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents is ultimately the responsibility of the Vice-President Academic and Provost (VPAP) at MSVU. The VPAP has designated day-to-day responsibility for the Policy to the MSVU Associate Vice-President Research (AVPR). The AVPR has authorized the Saint Mary's University's (SMU) Animal Care Committee (ACC), and, in particular, the Chair of the Committee, the Animal Care Coordinator, and the Animal Care Veterinarian to manage the reporting and resolution of animal welfare incidents, to review it annually, and make recommendations on any changes to the AVPR.

2) Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the process for reporting animal welfare incidents.

Document Reference	Document Title	Updated	Page
ACC.POL.014	Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents	October 2023	1

3) Definitions

ANIMAL CARE COMMITTEE (ACC)	The local representative of the CCAC responsible for ensuring that all animals used in teaching, research or testing at MSVU are treated ethically and in accordance with the Canadian Council on Animal Care’s (CCAC) policies and guidelines.
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	The faculty member who holds an approved Animal Use Protocol (AUP) and associated funding.
ANIMAL USER	Any faculty, staff, or student who uses animals for research or teaching.
ANIMAL FACILITY MANAGER	Designated personnel who oversee animal facility activities and operations. At MSVU, the PI holds this role at the Aquatics Laboratory.
ANIMAL WELFARE INCIDENT	<p>The CCAC defines an animal welfare incident as “an event that leads to the unanticipated death of research, teaching or testing animals, or poses an immediate threat to animal health or welfare”. This can include, but is not limited to, the following situations associated with animal deaths or threats to health or welfare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “a catastrophic failure of critical life-support system(s)”;• “disregard of, or unintended failure to follow [approved] practices or procedures”;• “significant and unanticipated morbidity or mortality unrelated to the above”; and• “serious or repeated noncompliance with CCAC standards that leads to the suspension by the animal

care committee or the institution of an animal-based activity that threatens animal health or welfare”.

An incident can be acute (e.g., over a few hours or days) or occur on a longer timescale (e.g., the length of the protocol).

POPULATION

The total number of animals of a given species on an approved Animal Use Protocol (AUP).

4) Scope

This policy applies to all animal users at MSVU who work with animals under an approved Animal Use Protocol.

5. Policy

5.1. An animal welfare incident is reportable to the ACC if:

5.1.1. the health or welfare of $\geq 20\%$ of the population is compromised in a manner not described and approved in the AUP;

5.1.2. morbidity or mortality is $\geq 20\%$ of the population when no baseline morbidity or mortality is approved in the AUP, or if population morbidity or mortality is $\geq 20\%$ above baseline mortality levels outlined, justified, and approved in the AUP.

5.2. An animal welfare incident must be reported to the ACC within 24 hours of an acute incident or when $\geq 20\%$ of a population have health and welfare or mortality concerns beyond those described and approved in the AUP.

5.3. If an unexpected incident occurs that leads to significant unexpected morbidity or mortality, but is below the levels outlined in Section 5.1, it must be discussed with the ACC Coordinator and Consulting Veterinarian to determine if an incident report should be submitted.

5.4. Roles and Responsibilities

5.4.1. Principal Investigator (PI): it is the responsibility of the PI to report all animal welfare incidents to the ACC within 24 hours of an incident occurring.

5.4.2. Animal Care Committee (ACC): it is the responsibility of the ACC to monitor and ensure compliance of animal use and animal facilities, review submitted

Document Reference	Document Title	Updated	Page
ACC.POL.014	Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents	October 2023	3

animal welfare incident reports at regularly scheduled meetings, and report incidents to the VPAR and/or AVPR and CCAC if mandatory.

5.4.3. SMU VPAR and MSVUAVPR: it is the responsibility of the SMU VPAR and MSVU AVPR to consult with the ACC if resolution of the incident cannot be reached.

5.5. Compliance

Failure of PIs to report animal welfare incidents is a serious breach of MSVU's [Policy on Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and may be investigated according to the [RCR Allegation Procedures](#), and, if found not to be in compliance, will face outcomes as described in the Policy.

6. Procedures for Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents

The procedure for reporting animal welfare incidents are as follows:

- 6.1. The MSVU Animal Welfare Incident Form is sent electronically to animalcare@smu.ca and the ACC Veterinarian by the PI within 24 hours of the acute incident or the point at which a longer incident reaches a reportable level (i.e., 20% mortality or welfare/health concerns beyond that approved in a protocol).
- 6.2. The ACC Veterinarian will assess the urgency and impact of the incident and initiate actions as appropriate (i.e., medical care, procedures, etc.).
- 6.3. The ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will review information submitted by the PI, conduct further investigation to determine the cause of the incident if appropriate, and ensure compliance with ACC and CCAC guidelines.

The ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will determine whether the incident must be formally reported to the CCAC based on the CCAC guidelines for Reportable Animal Welfare Incidents. The Chair will report the incident to the CCAC, the SMU VPAR and MSVU AVPR within 10 days of the event.

6.4. The ACC Chair, Coordinator and Veterinarian will collaborate with the PI to review protocols and mitigate reoccurrence.

6.5. The PI and/or Facility Manager will review animal use protocols, standard operating procedures, and any other relevant animal care training material with animal users

Document Reference	Document Title	Updated	Page
ACC.POL.014	Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents	October 2023	4

if needed.

6.6. The ACC will review the full animal welfare incident report and resolution at the next regularly scheduled ACC meeting. As with all ACC matters, ACC members who are in conflict of interest must recuse themselves from discussion of the incident unless the ACC requires clarification on any part of the event.

6.7. If resolution cannot be achieved by the ACC Chair in collaboration with PIs, the SMU AVPR, MSVU AVPR and /or the SMU VPR/MSVU VPAP will work in consultation with all parties to resolve the incident.

7. Relevant Documentation

- [CCAC Policy: Certification of ethical animal care and use programs](#)
- [FAQ: Certification of ethical animal care and use programs](#)
- [FAQ: CCAC reportable animal welfare incidents](#)

8. References

The following documents have been used extensively in the formulation of this policy.

- Saint Mary's University – SMU Policy on Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents (2023) (Retrieved October 2023)
- CCAC Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs: [CCAC policy: Certification of animal ethics and care programs](#) (Retrieved June 2023)
- CCAC Certification of Animal Ethics and Care Programs FAQ: [CCAC frequently asked questions: Certification of animal ethics and care programs](#) (Retrieved June 2023)

9. Document Modification History

Policy Number	Key Changes	Effective Date
ACC.POL.014	Addition of definitions, minor revisions, formatting for accessibility, update of hyperlinks	October 2023
ACC.POL.012	Original Version	June 2022

This Page is intentionally left blank.

Document Reference	Document Title	Updated	Page
ACC.POL.014	Reporting Animal Welfare Incidents	October 2023	6