

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT
CORPORATE EXECUTIVE
ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION NO 67

Ref: Woodvale 2002-2705

ANIMAL WELFARE ACT AND ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEE

This Administrative Instruction updates and replaces Administrative Instruction No 48.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) established an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) in 1990 with Terms of Reference approved by the Corporate Executive in June 1991. At that time there was no legislative requirement for the Department to have an AEC, however the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and *Animal Welfare (Scientific Purposes) Regulations 2003* and *Animal Welfare (General) Regulations 2003* now require that research institutions in Western Australia operate under a licence to use animals for scientific purposes.

The *Animal Welfare Act* intends to:

- promote and protect the welfare, safety and health of animals,
- ensure the proper and humane care and management of animals, and
- reflect the communities expectation that people who are in charge of animals will ensure they are properly treated and cared for.

The Act and Regulations also require that the “Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (NHMRC)” (the Code of Practice) is adhered to and that the institution’s AEC is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Code of practice. In December 2002, the WA Museum commenced using the CALM AEC to assess their scientific activities.

Licence to use animals for scientific purposes.

The *Animal Welfare Act* is administered by the Department of Local Government and Regional Development. CALM has been licensed to use animals for scientific purposes (Licence No. 03/21). Any staff using animals for scientific purposes must hold a copy of this licence and have AEC approval before undertaking the work. In addition they should also hold a Regulation 17 (Scientific Purposes) licence issued by the CALM Wildlife Branch.

Animals covered.

Animals covered by the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* are all live vertebrates, except humans and fish, and any prescribed invertebrates. No invertebrates are currently prescribed. Note that there is no distinction made between native and introduced or pest vertebrates. All are to be treated humanely.

Activities constituting “scientific purposes”.

The definition of scientific purposes in the *Animal Welfare Regulations 2003* is work undertaken “to demonstrate a product or technique”. Departmental activities covered include biological survey, fauna research and monitoring, and introduced animal control techniques, but not the operational control of pest animals providing that reasonable and proven techniques are used. Note that there is a code of practice for the destruction or capture, handling and marketing of feral livestock animals, and there are information notes for the control of various pest species listed on the Western Australian Department of Agriculture web site.

Applications for Animal Ethics approval

The Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes needs to be referred to when making application for approval to the AEC, particularly the section on Wildlife Studies (Section 5). In addition the AEC has developed Standard Operating Procedures to streamline the preparation of proposals. Applications for approval to use animals for scientific purposes will be available on the Department’s web site, or from Ms Joanne Smith at: joannes@calm.wa.gov.au

Applications can only be approved at convened meetings of the AEC and a quorum of AEC members is required. Chief Investigators may be invited to attend these meetings to provide further information if necessary. Between four and six meetings a year are held and staff will be notified of the dates in advance. AEC approval is required before work commences in all cases.

The principles of Refinement, Reduction, and Replacement will be followed by the AEC.

Staff competencies

There is a requirement to assess and document staff competencies in relation to their working with animals. AEC approval will only be given once it has been demonstrated that the staff competencies are matched to the type of work required.

General Inspectors

Wildlife Officers have been appointed as General Inspectors under Section 33 of the *Animal Welfare Act*.

Animal Ethics Committee Membership

The Code of Practice requires that an AEC must have a membership that comprises at least four persons with a separate person appointed to each of the following categories:

Category A – A person with qualifications in veterinary science, with experience relevant to the activities of the institution.

Category B – A person with substantial recent experience in the use of animals in scientific activities.

Category C – A person with demonstrable commitment to the welfare of animals, not employed by, or associated with the institution.

Category D – An independent person who does not and has not previously conducted scientific activities using animals, and is not employed by the institution.

In addition there is provision for additional members to ensure that the AEC can function effectively.

Keiran McNamara
A/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

10 June 2003

Distribution: all District and Regional managers, Nature Conservation program Leaders, A / Manager Wildlife Branch, A / Manager Wildlife Protection Branch, Manager Biodiversity Conservation Group, Woodvale.