



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™

Office of Research
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Principles for the Ethical Care and Use of Animals*

Introduction

Only the strongest possible allegiance to principles of bioethics can offer a sound basis for any discussion of responsible research. As reflected in the earliest considerations of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, scientific research has produced substantial social benefits...[and] some troubling ethical questions (The Belmont Report, 1979). The Belmont Report identified fundamental principles underlying the ethical evaluation of research involving human subjects. Similarly, the principles governing the ethical evaluation of the use of animals in research must be made equally explicit.

Vertebrate animals deserve moral concern. The following principles are offered to guide careful and considered discussion of the ethical challenges that arise in the course of animal research, a process that must balance risks, burdens and benefits. Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center will abide by these principles as well as all applicable laws and policies that govern the ethical use of animals (see list at the end). It is recognized that awareness of these principles will not prevent conflicts. These principles are also not meant to prescribe definite procedures for resolving such conflicts but rather to provide a framework within which challenges can be addressed in a rational manner.

Basic Principles

The use of animals in research involves responsibility for the stewardship of the animals, and responsibility to the scientific community and society. Stewardship is a universal responsibility that extends beyond the immediate use of the animals for research to include their acquisition, care and disposition while responsibility to the scientific community and society requires an appropriate understanding of, and sensitivity to scientific needs and community attitudes toward the use of animals.

Among the basic principles generally accepted in our culture, three are particularly relevant to the ethics of research using animals: respect for life, societal benefit and nonmaleficence.

Respect for Life

Living creatures deserve respect. This principle requires that animals used in research should be of an appropriate species and health status and should involve the minimum number required to obtain valid scientific results. It also recognizes that the use of different species may raise different ethical concerns. Selection of appropriate species should consider cognitive capacity and other morally relevant factors. Additionally, methods such as mathematical modes, computer simulation, and in vitro systems should be considered and used whenever possible.

Societal Benefit

The advancement of biological knowledge and improvements in the protection of the health and well-being of both humans and other animals provide strong justification for biomedical and behavioral research. This principle entails that where animals are used, the assessment of the overall ethical value of such use should include consideration of the full range of potential societal goods, the populations affected, and the burdens that are expected to be borne by the subjects of the research.

Nonmaleficence

Vertebrate animals are sentient. This principle entails that the minimization of distress, pain and suffering is a moral imperative. Unless the contrary is established, investigators should consider that procedures that cause pain or distress in humans may cause pain or distress in other sentient animals.

Cited Documents

[The Belmont Report](#)

[Animal Welfare Act](#)

[US Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research and Training](#)

[International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals](#)

[Public Health Service Act](#)

[Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#)

*Adopted from the NASA Principles for the Ethical Care and Use of Animals (the Sundowner Report) October 1996.