

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Committee Name: Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee, University Council

Date: May 14, 2026

Presented by: Eric Lamb, Chair, Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work

Subject: Care and Use of Animals in Science at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) Policy

MOTION

It is recommended by the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee that Council approve the revised Care and Use of Animals in Science Policy effective July 1, 2026.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the Vice President Research is proposing a new Care and Use of Animals in Science Policy. The existing 2001 policy is outdated, and functions more like a terms of reference document than a true policy. In addition, the current document is misaligned with Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) expectations. The new policy establishes university-level commitments and authorizes the University Animal Care Committee (UACC) to manage operational details, which must remain aligned with evolving CCAC guidelines. No significant changes to the current day-to-day operations of the UACC are expected to result from the adoption of this policy.

A Culture of Care Statement is also coming forward as a companion to the draft policy. A Culture of Care document reflects the university's commitment to supporting the wellbeing of staff, trainees, and others involved in animal work. The statement is driven by emerging best practices internationally and highlights compassion fatigue, emotional pressures, and the need for supportive environments for personnel within animal research.

The policy revision team included the UACC chairs, the University Veterinarian, and administrative staff, with governance office support and review by the legal office.

CONSULTATION

The University Veterinarian and Director of Animal Ethics Research and Infrastructure Kurtis Swekla brought forward the proposed policy and Culture of Care Statement to RSAW on March 12, 2026. The committee reviewed the documents and provided feedback, in addition suggested further consultation with the Pedagogical Merit Review Committee (PMRC) as well as the Scientific Merit Review Committee for Animal Based Research (SMRCABR).

A revised version of the Policy and Culture of Care Statement was brought forward to RSAW on April 9th, 2026. RSAW had the opportunity to review the revised documents and ask questions. RSAW voted in favour of the new policy and culture of care statement. The policy was also presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for review on April 20th, 2026 with no concerns raised.

ATTACHMENTS

1. **Care and Use of Animals in Science at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) Policy and Culture of Care Statement**

Title of Policy: Care and Use of Animals in Science at the University of Saskatchewan (USask)

Office of Administrative Responsibility:
Animal Care and Research Support Office
Policy Owner (Sponsor):
Vice-President, Research
Approving Body:
University Council

Category:
Policy Number:
Last Revision Date: Jan 1, 2001
Effective Date: July 1, 2026
Next Review Date: July 1, 2029

Purpose:

To ensure that activities involving animals are conducted in a principled and ethical manner, in full compliance with applicable local, federal, and international standards, laws, and regulations.

Principles:

The University of Saskatchewan acknowledges that the responsible use of animals in science plays an important role in advancing scientific knowledge and education for the benefit of human and animal health. This policy is in place to demonstrate that the University of Saskatchewan recognizes its ethical responsibility in the use of animals in science and is committed to ensuring such use is scientifically justified and conducted with respect for animal welfare. As part of animal use in science, the University of Saskatchewan is committed to the principles of Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement (the 3Rs).

USask is committed to fostering a culture of care in all activities involving animals. This commitment is guided by the principles outlined in the UACC Culture of Care document, which emphasizes respect, responsibility, and ethical stewardship in the use of animals for scientific and educational purposes.

The USask Animal Care and Use Program (ACUP) is committed to transparency in all scientific activities involving animals. This includes openness about animal housing facilities and a continuous focus on improvements that prioritize animal welfare in both decision-making and research and teaching practices.

Through these commitments, the University of Saskatchewan affirms its responsibility to balance scientific advancement with humane and ethical treatment of animals and in adherence to the CCAC Ethics Principles for Animal Use in Science document (2026) fundamental principles of respect for animals, sufficient benefit, and not causing harm.

Policy:

USask requires that any use of animals in science - including research, teaching, production, and testing - or in any other activities conducted by individuals affiliated with the University, its partners, or within USask facilities, services, or using University funds or accounts, must comply with all applicable local, federal, and international laws and standards. This includes adherence to the most current policies and guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), as well as any other standards endorsed by the CCAC, required by funding agencies, or mandated by law.

The University Animal Care Committee (UACC), reporting to the Vice-President Research, is the body authorized to oversee the administrative aspects of animal use at USask and its affiliates. The UACC's Terms of Reference define its oversight responsibilities and outline the structure and roles of all associated subcommittees (e.g., animal use protocol review, facility inspection, education and training). The UACC is responsible for establishing and monitoring procedures to ensure ethical conduct in activities involving animals and compliance with all applicable laws, guidelines, and policies. Specific Terms of Reference for Facility Veterinarians outline their responsibilities to oversee the health and welfare of all animals in their assigned facilities. Personnel involved in animal care and use must be appropriately trained and competent, and animals must be housed and cared for in a manner that supports their physical and behavioral well-being.

University Animal Care Committee (UACC)

The UACC is a university committee reporting to the Vice-President Research. Its Terms of Reference are developed by its members and endorsed by the Vice-President Research. The UACC is composed of faculty, veterinarians, scientists, institutional non-animal users, community members, facility managers, animal technicians, USask trainees (undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows), and program support staff.

The UACC meets regularly to review:

1. Its Terms of Reference and procedure documents, ensuring alignment with CCAC policies and guidelines, evolving University needs, and developments in science, animal welfare, and society.
2. The housing and care conditions for animals, as well as the suitability of research facilities.
3. Standard operating procedures related to animal care and use.

As per CCAC policy, all activities involving animals require scientific or pedagogical merit. Any activities which are funded without external independent peer review require internal USask scientific merit through the Scientific Merit Review Committee for Animal-Based Research (SMRCABR) which reports to the Vice-President Research.

The Pedagogical Merit Review Committee (PMRC) for Animal-based Teaching and Training, reporting to the Vice-Provost Students and Learning, evaluates all USask courses for credit and training programs that use animals for pedagogical merit ensuring animal use meets relevant learning outcomes and non-animal models are considered.

Scope of this Policy:

This policy applies to all members of USask involved in research, teaching, testing, or production of live animal vertebrates and cephalopods. Members of USask include but are not limited to, faculty, professors emeriti, sessional lecturers, staff, trainees, clinical faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, adjunct professors, visiting professors, visiting scholars, professional affiliates, associate members, residents, and postdoctoral fellows (PDFs) at USask.

In addition, this policy applies to those individuals and/or institutions that have entered into affiliation agreements with USask for purposes of Animal Care Committee oversight.

Authority

Acting on behalf of the USask President, the UACC has the authority to:

1. Halt any procedure if it determines that an animal is experiencing unnecessary pain or distress.
2. Immediately stop any use of animals that deviate from approved protocols, involve unapproved procedures, or cause unexpected pain or distress.
3. Order the euthanasia of an animal if its pain or distress cannot be relieved.

Responsibilities:

The Vice-President Research serves as the Institutional Official ensuring the University of Saskatchewan's Animal Care and Use Program complies with CCAC standards and all applicable legal and policy requirements.

The UACC is responsible for ensuring that all activities involving live animals are carried out only after approval of an animal use protocol by the USask Animal Research Ethics Board (AREB).

Researchers, instructors, and other animal users are responsible for conducting all animal-based activities in accordance with USask policies and procedures, as well as relevant provincial, national, and international laws and guidelines. Procurement or use of CCAC-defined animals must not occur before AREB approval is granted.

Major proposals and plans (e.g.; new species used, facility alterations), construction, or renovation that involve animal facilities or animal use at USask must have direct input and approval from the University Veterinarian to ensure compliance with applicable animal-based laws, policies, procedures, and guidelines.

Non-Compliance:

Failure to conduct animal use activities as approved by the USask AREB, or to comply with USask policies, procedures, and applicable federal, provincial, international, or local laws, is considered non-compliance. Such cases are addressed through the UACC and USask Responsible Conduct of Research non-compliance processes.

Definitions

The source of institutional approved definitions is in the Academic and Curricular Nomenclature.

For the purposes of this policy:

- Animals used in science: *defined by animals used in research, teaching, testing, or production*
- Research is defined as: *any investigation involving animals that is undertaken to acquire or contribute to knowledge. This includes both basic and applied research, and encompasses activities in fields such as biomedical sciences, agriculture, psychology, and veterinary medicine;*
- Teaching is defined as: *any use of animals for educational or training purposes, where the primary goal is to impart knowledge or develop skills;*
- Testing is defined as: *the use of animals in procedures designed to assess the safety, efficacy, or quality of substances, products, or devices, often required by government or industry standards for product approval (e.g. pharmaceuticals, chemicals);*
- Production is defined as: *the breeding and maintenance of animals for the purpose of supplying animals to be used in science and/or producing food, fiber, or other agricultural products;*
- Animals are defined as: *vertebrates and cephalopods.*

*Definitions are based on CCAC guideline documents.

Related Policies/Documents/Procedures

Lists and links to related University policies, procedures, and other relevant documents.

[USask Culture of Care](#)

[Academic and Curricular Nomenclature](#)

[UACC Terms of Reference](#)

[SMRCABR Terms of Reference](#)

[PMRC Terms of Reference](#)

Applicable Legislation or Regulations

Lists and links to Applicable Legislation or Regulations as applicable.

[University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995](#)

[Canadian Council on Animal Care \(CCAC\)](#)

[Canadian Council on Animal Care \(CCAC\) Three Rs](#)

[Saskatchewan Animal Protection Act, 2018](#)

[Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research, 2021](#)

[Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions](#)

Revision History

Please list the historical information in chronological order from oldest to newest.

Date initially approved and date(s) re-formatted or revised	By whom and what type of revision	Maintained by

Approval Path

Senior Management Team

Research Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee

University Council

Received by the University Secretary



BACKGROUND

The term Culture of Care (**CoC**) as used in the research animal community describes both an attitude and a comprehensive approach to the treatment and management of animals within an institution. An organizational mindset that surpasses mere adherence to the minimum standards set by local, regional, and national regulations characterizes CoC. An effective CoC is evident through the promotion of compassionate and respectful behavior towards both animals and personnel, and by fostering a sense of accountability for ongoing improvement processes. When fully embraced, a CoC is aspirational and continually evolves to ensure sustained programmatic enhancements.

The concept of a CoC has developed internationally during the past decade as a holistic and global approach to multiple aspects of ethical and responsible animal care and use. The key components of CoC include:

- thoughtful consideration and active implementation of beneficial animal welfare and replacement, reduction, and refinement (3Rs) practices for all CCAC covered species being maintained and worked with
- promoting well-being and support of those caring for and working with animals
- an institutional emphasis on excellence in scientific quality, reproducibility, and integrity
- the presence of mechanisms that foster institutional openness with internal and external stakeholders

Overall, an institution demonstrates CoC by promoting caring and respectful behavior towards animals and personnel, as well as instilling a sense of responsibility for sustaining processes of improvement. An institutional CoC ensures ethical and humane care and treatment of animals.

USASK STATEMENT ON CULTURE OF CARE

The University of Saskatchewan (**USask**) dedicates itself to fostering a CoC that transcends basic compliance with regulatory standards. USask commits to continuous improvement in the following key areas:

1. **Animal Welfare and the 3Rs:** USask prioritizes the well-being of all CCAC covered animals involved in research and teaching by adhering to the principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement.
2. **Staff and Student Well-being and Support:** USask recognizes staff, faculty and students are a significant asset. USask commits to providing a supportive and nurturing environment that promotes the well-being, professional growth, and job satisfaction for the entire USask community.

3. **Scientific Quality, Reproducibility, and Integrity:** USask strives for excellence in research and teaching practices with the goal of producing high quality, reproducible, and ethically sound scientific outcomes that contribute to the advancement of knowledge.
4. **Openness and Transparency:** USask believes in maintaining open lines of communication with internal and external stakeholders. Transparency in processes and findings is essential to building trust and fostering collaborative relationships.

By embedding these principles into daily operations, USask aims to create a positive and robust research and learning environment that benefits the community as a whole and **'Be What the World Needs'**.

The USask University Animal Care Committee (UACC) commits to fostering a CoC by focusing on the following areas:

Definition of Institutional Values and Policies: Internal communication helps to promote the establishment and reinforcement of institutional values and policies regarding animal care and use. Providing information to new staff, and re-training of existing animal users, is important for the acceptance of these values within the institution.

Coordination and Collaboration: Open and effective coordination and collaboration between senior administration and the UACC are essential for commitment and execution of a CoC across the institution's animal care and use program, veterinary practices, and animal care staff. Open communication between these key groups is vital for achieving a successful and effective CoC program.

Personnel Well-being: Attention to the well-being of personnel, particularly those performing tasks with a higher risk of compassion fatigue and stress, is crucial. A culture of care for animals is led by a CoC for people.

Training Programs: Implementing effective training programs ensures that personnel working with animals are skilled and competent. This reduces animal stress and enhances personnel confidence and satisfaction, contributing to high quality and reproducible research data.

Continuous Improvement: Ongoing evaluation and enhancement of the animal care and use program is essential. The UACC can achieve this through periodic reviews and evaluations of the program, ensuring that continuing education opportunities are available to UACC members and those working with animals, as well as through retrospective reviews with researchers and facility personnel.

Empowerment and Encouragement: USask encourages those involved in animal use to contribute to the improvement of the animal care and use program. Encouraging active participation and showing appreciation of contributions empowers animal users and fosters further promotion and focus on animal welfare and 3Rs initiatives.

Promotion of 3R Approaches: Actively promoting the 3Rs when caring for and working with animals is essential. Recognizing and rewarding 3Rs achievements by animal care and research

personnel can be an effective way to encourage improvements in this area.

Public Communication: Clearly communicating the institution's objectives in working with animals in science to the public helps maintain public trust and supports the institutional CoC. Communication with the public also helps support and enhance the personal well-being of those working with and studying animals.

REVISION HISTORY

Date Approved: April 2026		Written by: T. Liboiron, A. Plante, K. Swekla
Procedure Review and Revision History		
Revision Number	Review/Revision Date	Reviewer
1		