
Responsibilities of School Personnel under the Code

School personnel involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes have legal obligations under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 (the Act). This includes compliance with the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 (the Code). The Code provides an ethical framework and governing principles to guide decisions and actions of all those involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Non-compliance with the *Act* or *Code* may result in schools receiving a maximum fine of 300 penalty units. (Penalty unit value is notified in the Penalties and Sentences Regulation 2005).

If you are involved in the care and use of animals in teaching activities where the scientific purpose is to impart or demonstrate knowledge or techniques to achieve an educational outcome, you need to:

- be aware of the governing principles that apply to the care and use of animals
- know your responsibilities and be aware of your duty of care to the animals
- follow your education sector's policies and procedures to implement the Code.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

Respect for animals must underpin all decisions and actions involving the care and use of animals. The responsibilities associated with this obligation apply throughout the animal's lifetime.

All activities, including projects that involve the care and use of animals for scientific purposes must:

- commence only after animal ethics approval has been granted
- be subject to review, approval and monitoring by the QSAEC
- be conducted in accordance with the approval
- cease if approval is suspended or withdrawn.

GAINING ANIMAL ETHICS APPROVAL

Queensland schools intending to use animals for scientific purposes must apply for and receive animal ethics approval from the Queensland Schools Animal Ethics Committee (QSAEC) prior to conducting these activities. The QSAEC assesses the proposals and weighs the educational value against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals. The benefits of the use must outweigh the potential costs to the animal.

All schools must consider the 3Rs of animal welfare:

- **replacement** of animals with other methods
- **reduction** in numbers of animals used
- **refinement** of techniques used, in order to reduce adverse impacts on animals.

The animal ethics application process enables the applicant to assess their application against the 3Rs.

RESPONSIBILITIES

ACTIVITY LEADER

Before an animal is supplied to an approved project, responsibility for the wellbeing of the animal rests with the person who has been nominated as the activity leader.

The activity leader is responsible for the wellbeing of an animal throughout the period of use of the animal in the approved project, until provisions are made for the animal at the conclusion of their use. The activity leader must ensure that an adequate number of competent people can provide care for the animals (e.g. animal technicians, stock handlers, investigators).

The activity leader is also responsible for ensuring all reporting requirements and record keeping are completed and maintained in accordance with the *Code*.

Identification of the activity leader does not relieve the individual responsibility of each person who provides care for animals.

ANIMAL CARERS

Animal carers must, within the scope of their responsibilities:

- apply the principles of the Code in all aspects of the care of animals
- follow relevant policies and procedures established by their education sector and the QSAEC
- undertake activities in accordance with the conditions and requirements of approval from the QSAEC
- ensure that the animals' environment and management are appropriate for the species and the individual animal and support the animals' wellbeing
- ensure that steps are taken to safeguard animal wellbeing by avoiding and minimising harm, including pain and distress, to the animals
- ensure that their duties are performed competently
- liaise with activity leader, teachers and staff involved in the activity, on all matters relevant to the wellbeing of the animals
- maintain records of the care and monitoring of animals and, for breeding facilities, the health status and breeding performance of animals. If requested, animal carers must make these records available to the QSAEC, authorised external reviewers and investigators.

During the activity, animal carers must:

- ensure that animals are cared for and managed so that species-specific or strain-specific physiological and behavioural needs are met
- use procedures and practices that are based on current best practice
- ensure that the health and biosecurity status of animals is maintained in a manner that safeguards animal wellbeing and meets the requirements of their proposed use, in accordance QSAEC procedures
- ensure that their duties are performed competently, and be
- competent for the duties they perform, or
- under the direct supervision of a person competent to perform those duties
- ensure that students are supervised by a person who is competent for the procedure being performed, and that the level of supervision of students takes into account the competency and responsibilities of each student
- monitor and assess the wellbeing of animals for which they are responsible with sufficient frequency to ensure that harm, including pain and distress, is promptly detected and managed. Where animal carers are involved in the monitoring and assessment of animals after they have been supplied to an approved project, the activity leader must ensure that the scope and responsibilities for day-to-day monitoring are clearly outlined and communicated to all involved in the activity
- maintain records of monitoring and assessment of animal wellbeing
- take prompt actions based on the monitoring and assessment of animal wellbeing and in response to unexpected adverse events and emergencies.

After the activity involving the use of the animal has concluded, animal carers must make arrangements for the animals, in accordance with procedures and protocols approved by the QSAEC.

If this involves killing an animal, the animal carer must:

- use humane procedures for killing an animal that are appropriate to the species and circumstances
- ensure that all carcasses and tissues from animals that have died or been humanely killed are disposed of in a sanitary and appropriate manner.

FACILITY MANAGER (THIS MAY ALSO BE THE ANIMAL CARER)

The facility manager, with support as required from other staff members and advice from veterinarians, must:

- be competent, with appropriate animal care or veterinary qualifications or experience
- notify the QSAEC of any changes to the activity, including changes of animal facilities
- ensure that activities are implemented and conducted in accordance with the conditions and requirements of the activity/activities approved by QSAEC
- ensure that all people involved in the care of animals must understand and accept their role and responsibilities
- ensure that procedures and resources are in place so that all people involved in the care of animals can meet their responsibilities, including education, training and supervision of staff
- arrange for experienced veterinary services in a timely manner, if required and ensure that staff follow veterinary advice regarding care, husbandry and health of animals, and biosecurity, in the facility
- ensure that the wellbeing of animals for which they are responsible is monitored on a day-to-day basis by a competent person, and that appropriate actions are taken
- ensure that the necessary permits, approvals and licences relating to the holding and supply of animals are in place
- ensure regular assessment of the health status and breeding performance of all animals in accordance with current best practice, maintain appropriate records of this assessment and make these records available to investigators, the QSAEC and authorised external people
- ensure that animals are suitable for their proposed use
- ensure that staff are advised of the work health and safety issues associated with the animals under their care and the precautions they must take.

SICK OR INJURED ANIMALS

When animals for which they are responsible are ill or injured, or show unexpected abnormalities, the facility manager must:

- ensure provision of prompt diagnosis and treatment under direct veterinary supervision and control
- ensure appropriate actions are taken
- ensure that an unexpected adverse event form is submitted to the QSAEC for animals that are injured or die unexpectedly. If post mortem details or any outcomes from an internal investigation are available, they are to be sent to the QSAEC.

Investigation of an unexpected adverse event is required to ensure students, staff or other animals are not inadvertently affected. The response will depend on the animal and the circumstances. It may require seeking advice from a veterinarian to determine the best course of action (e.g. an examination of the dead animal, referral by the vet to biosecurity in the event of a notifiable condition) or diagnostic investigations to determine cause of death (e.g. water testing of an aquaponics facility).

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Schools must have a veterinarian contact, in case of emergency.

If an emergency welfare intervention is considered necessary for an animal (e.g. treatment or humane killing of an animal), animal carers must take reasonable steps to first contact the activity leader. However, the welfare of the animal must be the priority at all times and may necessitate immediate intervention. Animal carers must promptly advise the activity leader of actions taken and the reasons for emergency interventions. Any unexpected adverse events must be reported to the QSAEC, including those where

animals may not have been injured but have been put at risk e.g. animals escaping from enclosures and wandering on roads.

STAFF CHANGES

Activity Notification Forms are given an approval number based on the expectation that staff will conduct the activity as described in the Standard Operating Procedure. The principal accepts responsibility for this.

In the event that an activity leader changes and the approved activity will continue, the activity can only be continued/conducted under the following conditions:

- the principal has confirmed that the replacement teacher is aware of their responsibilities to conduct the approved activities
- the replacement teacher has the qualifications or experience required to conduct the approved activities
- the animal ethics officer has been notified of the change of activity leader.

Unlike SOPs, full consideration of the qualifications and experience of the activity leader is made by the QSAEC as part of the approval process. As such, in the event that the staff member is no longer available to conduct the activity, notification of the change in activity leader should be made via a modification form to the chair of QSAEC **who can provide interim approval** until the modification is considered at the next QSAEC meeting.

RESOURCES

- The Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition 2013 (the Code) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-code-care-and-use-animals-scientific-purposes>
- Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2001-064>
- Alternative to animal use <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/livestock/animal-welfare/animals-science/using-animals/alternatives>
- Animal ethics and your responsibilities <https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/animals-in-education/ethics-and-responsibilities>
- Animal ethics approval process <https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/animals-in-education/ethics-approval-process>
- QSAEC's frequently asked questions <https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/stages-of-schooling/animals-in-education/faq>