WILDLIFE ETHICS COMMITTEE

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION FORM INFORMATION SHEET

Enquiries and Completed forms (in Word or PDF format) should be sent to the Executive Officer, of the Wildlife Ethics Committee (WEC) at: DEW.WildlifeETHICSCommittee@sa.gov.au

What do I need to know before I start?

Researchers should be familiar with the South Australian Animal Welfare Act, 1985 and must act in accordance with all requirements of the Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes 8th Edition (updated 2021). Investigators and teachers have personal responsibility for all matters related to the welfare of the animals they use.
It is the responsibility of investigators, teachers and institutions using animals to ensure that the use of animals is justified, and that the welfare of the animals is always considered. They must promote the development of techniques that replace the use of animals, minimise the numbers of animals used and refine procedures to avoid pain or distress in animals (the 3Rs – Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).

Researchers should be aware that there are two application forms available. If you are carrying out a standard biological survey in line with Guidelines for Vertebrate Surveys in South Australia the Fauna Survey application should be used.
For all other wildlife research the Wildlife studies application should be used.

How do I apply to the Wildlife Ethics Committee?

It is important that applications for ethics approval are submitted well before the commencement dates. No project can start without written approval from the Wildlife Ethics Committee (WEC). The WEC meets at least once every eight weeks. All applications are circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting to allow members reading and consideration time. Refer to the website for deadline dates to receive all submissions. Incomplete applications or applications that do not contain sufficient detail, will require follow-up questions and/or may need to be re-submitted. This will delay the approval process. The Executive Officer can offer guidance on completing the application form. Researchers will be notified with the outcome of their application by email as soon as possible following the WEC meeting.

Working collaboratively on a project

In some cases, several institutions may be involved in a project and you must seek approval from the appropriate animal ethics committee.

- If animals are to be held in captivity, the appropriate committee is the one which is responsible for the animal holding facility.
- If animals are free-living, the appropriate committee is that of the organisation responsible for the Principal Researcher (as directed on SA Animal welfare research and teaching licence).

What does the WEC want in an application?

Common problems with applications that may result in delays of approval include:

- The use of animals, and numbers required, is not adequately justified.
- The use of less invasive alternatives is not adequately addressed.
- The use of non-animal alternatives (e.g. modelling; historical data) is not adequately addressed.
- There is inadequate or insufficient information, with respect to aims, objectives and benefits.
- The description of the procedures, including what will happen to which group(s) of animals, is not clearly explained.
- There is inadequate information about how animals will be monitored or how any adverse effects will be managed.
- The role, experience and training of personnel are inadequately addressed.

The application form is designed to help applicants to appreciate the ethical aspects of their project and to enable members of the Committee to understand fully the ethical implications of the use of animals in the project.

Why should I use WEC policies and what are they?

The Committee's policies can be used as a guide to ensure that your application is in accordance with approved procedures. If you use methods that are not recommended by the Committee, your application may take longer to assess. Visit the WEC website to download these policies.

- Collection of blood from wildlife
- Collection of hair and feather samples
- Collection of voucher specimens
- Euthanasia of research animals in the field
- Reporting adverse events
- Submitting an application form (this document)
- Transportation of live animals
- Use of live traps to capture terrestrial vertebrates
- Use of microchips for marking wildlife
- Use of tracking tunnels

How do I complete and submit the application form?

The application form is available from the WEC website. It is important that you save the template first, before filling in the form from your computer. When you have completed the application form:

- save it to your computer
- have the application signed by all relevant parties

- Send an electronic copy to the WEC Executive Officer at DEW.WildlifeETHICSCommittee@sa.gov.au

Hints on answering the questions

The following may assist in completing the forms. You may attach other documents if appropriate, but they must not replace any section of the form. If you have further questions, please contact the WEC Executive Officer.

Application question	**Hints on answering question**
Project details	The title should describe the work proposed. The lay summary must be written in plain English. Approvals for on-going or lengthy projects are given for a maximum of three years, after which a new application must be submitted.
Applicant and personnel details	The principal applicant/researcher has overall responsibility for the project, including fulfilling all reporting requirements. Students cannot be applicants. If the research is a student project, the supervisor should be the applicant, but students are encouraged to contribute to the preparation of the application so they understand the process and responsibilities. You must state the role of each person involved and explain how their qualifications and experience are appropriate to the procedures to be performed, and relevant to the species to be used. Include details of any short courses in techniques, animal care and handling and legal responsibilities that have been undertaken by the research workers involved in the project. If the researchers are inexperienced, you must state what arrangements will be made to ensure that appropriate training will be carried out prior to the commencement of the project. Explain how inexperienced researchers or assistants will be supervised. Wildlife Ethics Committee training must be completed every three years by all participants of a research project.
Aims, justification, potential benefits and replacement	The Code requires that scientific and teaching activities using animals may be performed only after the decision has been made that they are justified, weighing the predicted scientific or educational value of the project against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals. The overview of the project, including its aims and objectives is essential to help Committee members understand the basis of the request to use animals and the potential benefits of the project. In writing your overview, you must use plain English that can be understood by non-scientists. The answer must be clear and simple and avoid scientific terminology. Investigators and teachers are required by the Code of Practice to consider the principle of replacement of animals with alternative models where possible. Applicants have responsibility to inform the WEC about the suitability of alternatives.
Procedures and refinement	The Code requires that proposals must identify and justify the impact of all aspects of the project on an animal's wellbeing from the time it is obtained until the project is completed, and detail how that impact will be minimised. To fulfil this requirement, all activities involving animals must be described in full
Animals required and reduction	Irrespective of whether or not the experiments are likely to cause distress to the animals, the WEC needs to assess whether or not the use of animals will allow worthwhile scientific or educational objectives to be met. Each project must use no more than the minimum number of animals necessary to ensure scientific and statistical validity. You must be able to adequately justify the number of animals needed. The statistical basis for the number of animals required must be provided. For many projects, the number of animals to be

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	used can best be determined by a power analysis. A statistician may assist you in designing the project to ensure that the maximum amount of valid information is obtained from the minimum number of animals
Monitoring and emergencies	You must inform the WEC of the extent to which the monitoring of animals and their care has been considered in the project design. Your answers must explain how you will detect signs of pain and distress, and how you will assess animals regularly for these signs. You must give details of possible emergencies e.g., breakdown of cooling or heating systems, or unplanned staff absence. The WEC needs to know that adequate plans are in place to cover such emergencies.
Impact category	When completing the impact category for your project, the examples given are a guide only to some procedures that may fall under these categories. Please assess your methodology in relation to what you think best categorises the procedures. Mark more than one category if appropriate. Note: Killing animals humanely for museum voucher specimens is Category B – Animal Unconscious no Recovery. Category H – Death as an Endpoint only applies in those rare cases where a procedure is designed to cause the death of animals with no humane end point.
Pain classification	Your assessment of the likely pain or distress must correlate with the stated impact category.
Use of drugs	You must list all drugs to be administered including sedatives, analgesics and preventives (e.g. Vitamin E/Selenium). Include concentration, dose rates and volumes and attach the SA Health Department License listing the substances used unless you are a registered veterinarian.
Risk assessment	Your answers must identify all the potential risks that may arise from the project, including risks to the animal, risks that may arise from the procedures, and risks to the researcher and other people involved in the project. In providing strategies that will be used to prevent, minimise or manage the potential risks identified for this project, you should consider the 3-R's (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).
Capture methods	The WEC understands that it is often not possible to accurately predict how many animals will be captured in some studies. However, an attempt must be made to explain the number of animals that need to be caught in order to satisfy your research or teaching purpose. For fauna surveys, you should refer to previous studies, in similar habitats and in the same season, to indicate likely species/ genus and give numbers within a realistic range. The number of traps to be employed, plus known trapping success from similar surveys, could also be used to give an estimate of numbers

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Collection of biological samples (e.g. hair, tissue, blood etc.)	Blood collection impacts upon the pain and distress experienced by the animal, therefore refinements to the methodology must be considered in order to meet the requirements of the Code. The most appropriate methodology will vary according to the species, individual animal characteristics (e.g., age, sex), the volume of blood required, and the requirements of the research. If you apply to use methods that are not recommended by the Committee, you must justify the method proposed and your application may take longer to assess. The recommended maximum volume of blood collected as a single sample is 10% of the circulating blood volume. As a general guide, the circulating blood volume of most animals is approximately 5- 10% of the animal's bodyweight. Thus a maximum of 1% of the total body weight is the recommended volume of blood collected. Only small amounts of blood are needed for most DNA studies. Applicants will need to clearly justify why amounts larger than this are needed. Because taking blood from many animals is stressful to both animal and researcher, blood should only be an option where other tissues (e.g. ear biopsy, fur) are not useable
Anaesthesia or sedation	You must be able to explain how the use of anaesthesia will benefit the animal, not just the researcher. Research activities that are liable to cause pain of a kind and degree for which anaesthesia would normally be used in veterinary practice must be carried out under anaesthesia. Researchers must be aware that the effects of a series of stressors, such as trapping, handling, transportation, marking and sampling can be cumulative, and that anaesthesia may be recommended in these situations. If using anaesthesia in the field, animals should be able to experience uneventful recovery to full consciousness in an observation area where they are able to maintain normal body temperature and are protected from injury and predators.
Collection of museum voucher specimens	A critical element in biological surveys is accurate, challengeable and reviewable taxonomic identifications. Applicants will be expected to liaise closely with the South Australian Museum, and seek advice on the numbers and species to be collected as voucher specimens. You will need to provide the museum with a species list on which to base their advice. This list can be obtained from Department for Environment and Water (DEW). Contact DEWBioDataRequests@sa.gov.au for data requests. DEW charge on a cost recovery basis – no charge is applied for the actual data. See the WEC Collection of Voucher Specimens policy for more information.
Transporting animals	The time for which an animal is held should be minimal and consistent with the achievement of scientific or educational objectives. Animals must be held in a way that minimises stress and injury. Researchers must base management practices for captured animals on available information about the normal behaviour of the species and the likely response to captivity. Close confinement devices such as bags and crates must: • allow animals to rest comfortably • minimise the risk of escape and injury • be adequately ventilated • maintain animals within appropriate levels of ambient light, temperature and humidity • minimise the risk of disease transmission. Transportation can cause animals distress due to confinement, movement, noise and changes in environment and personnel. The extent of any distress will depend on the animals' health, temperament, species, age and sex, the number of animals travelling together and their social relationships, the

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	period without food and water, the duration and mode of transportation, environmental conditions, particularly extremes of temperature, and the care given during the journey. The conditions and duration of the transportation must ensure the impact on animal health and welfare is minimal. There must be satisfactory delivery procedures in place, with animals received by a responsible person. Transportation by air should be in accordance with International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animals Regulations.
Identification of individual animals	Animals should only be marked permanently when a project is sufficiently funded to ensure that efforts can be made to recapture/relocate the marked animal/population. The method chosen to identify individual animals must be that which causes the least distress and interference with the normal functioning of the animal within the context of the scientific purpose and should be the most appropriate for the species and the project.
Tracking or monitoring technologies	• You should use alternative, less invasive methods wherever possible. • You must give evidence that the methods used, including weight and attachment are ones that have been previously used on the same or similar species and have been proved to be satisfactory. • Total package weight (collar, transmitter, battery, aerial and bonding material) should ideally be less than 5% of the animal's bodyweight, less than 4% for bats. • Where freely attached, antennae should cause minimum disruption to the movement of the animal. Animals should be closely tracked for the first 24 hours. You should include a discussion of what you will do if attachments are found to be causing distress to the animal. • Transmitters should normally be removed from all animals at the end of the survey. You will need a good justification if you do not plan to do this. • Collars or harnesses should not be used in species where they would interfere with locomotion e.g., aquatic, burrowing animals. 6 The potential negative impacts on the animal should include consideration of aspects such as physical discomfort, increased energy expenditure, increased risk of predation, reduced foraging ability, capture and handling stress, surgical risk, infection risk and entanglement potential.
Other approvals and requirements	You must ensure that you have the appropriate licence/permits. It is the principal researcher's responsibility to ensure that they comply with all relevant legislation.

What other obligations rest with the Principal Applicant/Researcher?

The process does not stop with the submission of your application.

Reports	A written progress report is required for the work conducted each calendar year (for ongoing projects) and a final report is due as soon as practicable on completion of the project. Reporting forms are available on the WEC website.
Amendment	Approval is required for additional researchers, additional procedures, refinement of methodology, or animal numbers. The Executive Committee may give interim approval for a minor amendment/modification, but all other amendments must be

	considered at a full meeting in the same way as new applications. Amendment forms are available on the WEC website.
Accidental deaths/complications	Any unexpected deaths, or complications (adverse events) that may impact on the wellbeing of an animal used in the study, must be reported immediately to the WEC. The WEC recommends that whenever possible, a necropsy should be conducted in the event of a death. In the event of a death or complication, contact the Executive Officer and lodge an adverse event report form providing details of the project, a description the adverse event including date(s), the species and numbers involved, the cause (where known) and an explanation of the remedial action taken.
Record keeping	The legislation requires you to keep records of the animals that you use, and everything that you do with the animals allocated to your project. These must be made available to the Committee (or an external review panel) on request. Examples are field notebooks, datasheets, or daily feeding charts
Access to facilities and work sites	The Committee is required to monitor approved projects and may make inspections of animal holding facilities or work sites to ensure that activities are being conducted as approved by the Committee and in accordance with the Code. Inspections of remote field locations may be performed by a delegate and can be substantiated with photographs or videos.

What if I need assistance?

If you need assistance, contact the Executive Officer – Wildlife Ethics Committee Department for Environment and Water DEW.WildlifeETHICSCommittee@sa.gov.au

Approved by	Science and Information Branch, DEW	Date Approved	28/3/2024