Ethical guidelines for students in laboratory classes using animals or animal tissues

Introduction

The use of animals or animal tissues in laboratory classes is a privilege that brings with it responsibilities. These responsibilities go well beyond the need to avoid cruelty to animals and involve a genuine commitment to their welfare and a respect for the contribution they make to your learning. Outlined below are principles to consider in helping you to meet these responsibilities and to derive maximum benefit from the use of animals in laboratory classes.

Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching
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Principles to consider

1. **Consider why animals or animal tissues are being used in the laboratory**
   The justification for using animals should be that their use is essential for achieving educational outcomes, while recognising the potential for harm to animals to achieve these outcomes. Consideration must be given to whether the educational outcomes could be achieved without the use of animals or animal tissues. Every student and staff member should be mindful of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement) when working with animals.

2. **Consider the requirements for animal welfare and animal handling**
   At all times the welfare of the animal you use is your responsibility not just your teacher's responsibility. This can be considered as a "duty of care". If you are required to handle animals during a laboratory class, it is important to follow the instructions of staff in the correct handling and restraint techniques for the species with which you are working.

3. **Consider the regulatory environment**
   The use of animals in research and teaching in Australia is regulated by State and Territory government legislation incorporating the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*[1]. The use of animals for research and teaching must first be approved by an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC). Gaining this approval involves justification for using animals (species and number), the means by which animals will be handled and, if required, humanely killed, and the potential research and educational outcomes of the work balanced against any potential harm to the animals used. The skills of the staff involved and the supervision of the students are also evaluated. In fact, the questions raised by AECs should be those asked by each student regarding the use of animals for their education.

4. **Consider your own views in using animals or animal tissues in the laboratory**
   You should discuss the use of animals and animal tissues with other students and staff. Opinions should be formed and aired, with appropriate justification, in an open and accepting environment. You should feel free to make suggestions that might improve future laboratory classes, and to this end, student opinion regarding the use of animals in teaching should be encouraged.

5. **Consider your responsibility to make sure that good use is made of the learning opportunity**
   You should know what underlying principles are being taught in the class and understand the details that illustrate those principles. This involves reading background material from lecture notes, references and laboratory manuals before coming to class and being generally prepared to maximise the learning experience. Use every opportunity, within the approved scope of the class, to develop manual, observational, and recording skills.

ANZCCART has the following objectives:

- to promote excellence in the care of animals used in research and teaching and thereby minimise any discomfort that they may experience;
- to ensure that the outcomes of the scientific uses of animals are worthwhile;
- to promote the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) as they apply to the use of animals for scientific purposes; and
- to foster informed and responsible discussion and debate within the scientific and wider community regarding the scientific uses of animals.

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[1] "Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes" (8th Edition, 2013)
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea28