FACT SHEET: ANIMAL RESEARCH AT UCSF

Overview of Animal Research at UCSF:

UC San Francisco is the nation’s leading university exclusively focused on health, with a public mission to translate biomedical discoveries into better therapies and cures for patients throughout the world. Research on campus already has led to significant advances – both in laboratories and for patients – in areas such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease.

Many of these breakthroughs would not have been possible without the involvement of laboratory research animals, including the work conducted by UCSF’s five Nobel laureates that led to internationally acclaimed discoveries.

UCSF honors the contribution that research animals make to medical science by providing them with humane conditions and care, and is dedicated to being a leader in the humane and ethical care of all animals that make these discoveries possible. To that end, UCSF has a range of safeguards in place to ensure that these and all other animals are treated humanely.

National Standards for Animal Research & Care:

Animal research is highly regulated, and UCSF is committed to full compliance with all regulatory agencies and oversight groups. Everyone involved in the use of animals in research at UCSF must receive approval by the UCSF Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), whose membership includes UCSF veterinarians, scientists experienced in research involving animals, physicians and members of the public.

The UCSF animal care committee only approves a study if the researcher has demonstrated serious consideration of the three Rs: Replacement of research animals with cultured cells or computer models; Refinement of experiments to minimize pain and/or distress; and Reduction in the number of animals used to the minimum necessary to obtain valid results.

In addition, the federal Animal Welfare Act sets rigorous standards for the care and treatment of research animals, to which UCSF requires all faculty and staff to comply.

Beyond the dictates of laws and regulations, we recognize that laboratory animals are living creatures to be treated with care and compassion.
External Accreditation:
UCSF has earned repeated approval from the NIH for its animal research program and has been accredited since 2004 by the international Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC), which recognizes the highest ethical standards for the care of research animals. This gold-standard for animal research worldwide is based on an AAALAC evaluation of the entire UCSF program for animal care and use. In addition, a June 2013 full inspection by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which enforces the Animal Welfare Act, resulted in no concerns in UCSF’s animal research program.

Ongoing Efforts to Improve Animal Care
Due to the number of animals involved in UCSF research – roughly 1 million in total, of which 99.9 percent are rodents or fish – University veterinary and research staff remains constantly vigilant to ensure that they receive humane and compassionate treatment.

Compliance staff members assess every animal research study and conduct audits to ensure that they comply with UCSF’s expectations. In the rare situations in which care does not meet these standards, UCSF takes immediate action in accordance with federal and state regulations and University policy, and works with the laboratory to prevent a recurrence.

UCSF also has a team of veterinarians, veterinary nurses and animal health staff who focus solely on ensuring that all research animals receive proper veterinary care and treatment. Most faculty and staff scientists come to UCSF specifically for its public mission and are equally committed to humane research.

Over the past few years, the University has continued to assess and improve its animal care facilities and practices, including the following efforts:

- Invested nearly $100 million since 2000 to build and equip new, modern facilities for the housing and care of our animals.
- Improved lab safety signage for researchers and staff.
- Clarified and streamlined institutional policies and procedures to reflect established best practices, and ensured these policies were readily available for faculty.
- Improved institutional oversight, including more faculty volunteers on the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) as well as training and post-approval monitoring activity for researchers.
- Instituted new policies and procedures for addressing noncompliance on campus, including steps to lab suspensions and closures.
- Implemented a zero-tolerance policy for repeated or serious noncompliance.

Committed to Humane Animal Treatment
UCSF is world-renowned for the caliber of biomedical research conducted on campus and remains fully committed to ensuring the humane and ethical care of all animals that make these discoveries possible.

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