



## Policy on Animal Escape Notification

### No. 5610

**Policy Effective Date:**  
9/19/1991

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**Policy Owner:**  
Sherwood Wilson

**Policy Author:** (*Contact Person*)  
Kayla Smith

**Affected Parties:**  
Faculty  
Staff  
Graduate

**1.0 Purpose**

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### 1.0 Purpose

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, hereinafter referred to as the university, has certain responsibilities in its use of animals for teaching and research which include:

1. Humane care, housing, and use of animals as mandated by federal laws and policies including the federal Animal Welfare Act (P.L. 89-544 ET SEQ), the U.S. Public Health Service Policies, and the NIH Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, providing annual reports to federal regulatory agencies on the status of the program of animal care and any problems that arose during the previous year.
2. Provision of oversight of university animal care and use by a veterinarian with laboratory animal training and experience, and an institutional animal care committee, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), which is appointed by the designated Institutional Official (the Vice President for Research and Innovation), reviews animal use proposals, and inspects animal holding facilities to assure the integrity of caging and humane housing procedures.
3. Provision of a working environment for its employees that meets legal standards for affording protection from physical or biological hazards to those who directly handle the animals, and to minimize or eliminate secondary exposure (via aerosols, contaminated equipment, or animal escape) to university employees not working with animals.

Inappropriate prevention measures and inadequate response to the escape of one or more university-owned animals erodes public confidence in the university's commitment to, and provision of, public safety practices, and jeopardizes the university's compliance with federal laws regulating the comfort and safety of its animals and the integrity and security of their caging.

To provide the needed assurances to university personnel, the surrounding community, and to federal regulatory agencies, the following policy and procedures address ways to minimize the likelihood of escape, and to assure appropriate communication and interaction with appropriate university and community officials should an animal escape occur.

### 2.0 Policy

The escape of any animal whose escape poses a potential risk to public safety, the health and well-being of domestic and wild species, and to personal property, or if it escapes onto a highway or into a residential area, must be reported immediately to the Virginia Tech Police Department and the Department Head for the unit from which the animal escaped, with subsequent notification of the university Veterinarian, who will notify appropriate



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university officials of the situation to allow initiation of adequate community liaison and communication.

It is the responsibility of the Department Head for each animal-holding facility to designate primary and backup individuals (i.e., Facility Supervisors, Principal Investigators, Department Head) who will be responsible for notifying the Virginia Tech Police Department and the university Veterinarian in a timely fashion. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in a review of the incident by the university's IACUC, with possible withdrawal of privileges of animal use by the investigator or the facility.

This policy is applicable to, but procedures may differ for, the Virginia Agricultural Research and Extension Centers (ARECs), [Middleburg, Seafood (Hampton), Shenandoah Valley (Steeles Tavern), Southern Piedmont (Blackstone), Southwest Virginia (Glade Springs), and Tidewater (Suffolk)] that house and maintain animals. If an escape occurs that poses a risk to public safety or property in one of the surrounding communities, the Superintendent (or his/her designee) of that station should contact one of the administrators of the AREC (i.e., Director, Associate Director, or Assistant Director) within 2 hours after detection of the escape. That administrator will then make the appropriate notifications within the university system.

### 3.0 Procedures

#### 3.1 Prevention of Escape

The university's IACUC has the federal mandate to inspect all laboratory animal facilities every six months, reporting any deviation in facilities or care to the Institutional Official for Animal Care matters, who is responsible on behalf of the university to assure compliance with the federal laws and regulations governing animal care and use. The university Veterinarian or his/her designee may inspect problematic areas on a more frequent basis. Deviations involving integrity or security of caging must be rectified within the specified time period, or authorization and approval for animal use may be withdrawn. It is the responsibility of the department that operates an animal facility to expend or procure the funding necessary to correct caging problems. The IACUC cannot be denied access to a facility to assess caging integrity, though requests for a postponement or delay will be considered if the physical presence of the inspection team will adversely affect an ongoing research project. Each department shall provide training for its employees in appropriate handling and restraint techniques to assure that animals will not escape during transfer or handling. The IACUC shall assist the department in developing and monitoring prevention measures and post-escape contingency procedures.

#### 3.2 Response(s) to Escapes

##### 3.2.1 Duties of the Department

Each Department Head shall designate one or more individuals with the responsibility for promptly notifying the Virginia Tech Police Department and the university Veterinarian for any animal escape that meets the criteria outlined in the policy. This person shall also coordinate the Virginia Tech Police Department's involvement in the recapture and return of the animal(s) to university animal holding facilities. The Department and its staff should use whatever personnel and equipment is needed to quickly recapture and return the animal to a secure primary enclosure. The Department should implement corrective measures to identify deficiencies in caging or handling procedures to prevent further escapes. The Department Head shall also contact the University Relations



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Information Officer for his/her respective college or the Senior Associate Vice President, University Relations for advice and guidance in dealing with media inquiries or in preparing public statements. In the event that the university Veterinarian cannot be contacted, the departmental designee shall contact the Virginia Tech Police Department, who will then make the appropriate notifications within the administration.

### 3.2.2 Duties of the Virginia Tech Police Department

Once notified of the escape of an animal governed by the policy, the Virginia Tech Police Department will determine, after consultation with appropriate departmental personnel, the necessity/advisability of notifying regional law enforcement agencies, advising them of the nature of the problem and requesting assistance if necessary. All reported cases of animal escape will be transmitted at least daily, or sooner if warranted by the situation, to the Virginia Tech Police Department.

### 3.2.3 Duties of the University Veterinarian

Once notified of the escape of an animal governed by the policy, the university Veterinarian shall notify the Virginia Tech Police Department (for public safety concerns), the Institutional Official for Animal Care matters (for regulatory/compliance concerns), the Office of University Relations (for public information and media liaison), the President's Office, and the IACUC members (also for regulatory/compliance concerns). The university Veterinarian and the IACUC shall make recommendations for correcting deficiencies that lead to the escape of the animal. The university Veterinarian will be available, at the request of University Relations, to make public comment on the situation.

## 4.0 Definitions

## 5.0 References

The Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. § 2131 et seq.

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/7/chapter-54>

National Institutes of Health, *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Guide-for-the-Care-and-Use-of-Laboratory-Animals.pdf>

Federation of Animal Science Societies, *The Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching*

[http://www.fass.org/docs/agguide3rd/Ag\\_Guide\\_3rd\\_ed.pdf](http://www.fass.org/docs/agguide3rd/Ag_Guide_3rd_ed.pdf)

Public Health Service, Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/PHSPolicyLabAnimals.pdf>

Virginia Tech, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee website (additional resources, training information)

<https://www.researchcompliance.vt.edu/iacuc/>

Virginia Tech, University Policy 13035, *Virginia Tech Animal Research Policy*

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/13035.pdf>



## 6.0 Approval and Revisions

Approved September 19, 1991 by the Vice President for Business Affairs, Raymond D. Smoot, Jr.

- Revision 1  
Sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3 – Responsibility moved from Director of Public Safety, Health and Transportation to the Virginia Tech Police Department.  
Approved May 8, 2002 by the Vice President for Administration and Treasurer, Raymond D. Smoot, Jr.
- Revision 2
  - Section 1.2 – Update of name of the university’s animal care committee, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
  - Section 2 – delete wording “which cannot be recaptured within 30 minutes of the discovery of its escape”
  - Technical corrections and updates.Approved March 11, 2011 by Vice President for Administrative Services, Sherwood G. Wilson.
- Revision 3  
Technical updates to responsible personnel, titles, AREC locations, and references.  
Approved January 23, 2017 by Vice President for Administration, Sherwood G. Wilson.