

VISUAL AND AUDIO DOCUMENTATION OF RESEARCH ANIMALS AND ANIMAL USE AREAS

1. Policy statements

This policy outlines the IACUC requirements for the use of visual and audio documentation of research animals and animal use areas. The intention of this policy is to

- a) ensure a minimally disruptive environment for resident animals,
- b) to protect the confidentiality and integrity of research,
- c) to help in the accurate representation of the University policies and procedures, and
- d) to assure that the use of animals is not misrepresented by external parties.

None of the following should be posted on any social media sites or shared via any messaging apps and electronic media:

- a) photography and/or video recording of
 - i. research animals;
 - ii. vivaria;
 - iii. PI procedure rooms;
- b) sound recording of animals or animal research procedures;
- c) diagnostic images (images from diagnostic equipment such as IVIS, μ CT, mPET and MRI scanner).

NUS students and staff may share links to published media such as journal articles or interviews. However, they are not allowed to post extracted photos or recordings of animals on social media sites or send via messaging apps.

2 Definitions

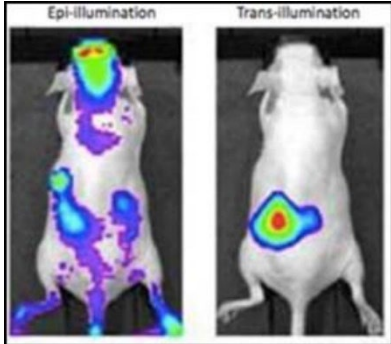
Animals	All live fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, non-human mammals and cephalopods.
Approved Protocol	Any project that involves the use of any animal for any scientific purpose and that is approved by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
Observational Study	Observation of animals from a distance of at least 50m, without any type of interaction with them and/or manipulation of their environment. Observation study does not require IACUC approval. Please refer to Annex B " <i>Observational study checklist for PI</i> " for more details.
Recording Devices	Equipment used to capture and document images, movement, or sound including but not limited to dictation devices, tape or digital recorders, cameras, preclinical or diagnostic equipment for imaging and video recording equipment.

3 Scope

1. All animals (live or dead) under NUS protocol; and/or any animal care and use area included in the NUS animal care and use program; and

2. Any photography, video recording, or sound recording. This includes use of photos, videos and sound recording taken under an observational study that is exempted from IACUC review and approval.

Data covered under this policy includes photos, videos and audio recordings of both live animals and carcasses. The table below provides examples of the type of visual documentation that does and does not require IACUC approval.

Type of visual documentation	Approval by IACUC?
All photos, all videos and all sound recording of all species of animals including carcasses.	Yes
Close-up photos or videos of organs or tissues that are within the living animal or carcass.	Yes
Close-up photos or videos of isolated organs or tissues that are outside the living animal or carcass.	No
All diagnostic or pre-clinical images (IVIS, μ CT, mPET and MRI scanner etc) of NHP .	Yes
Diagnostic or pre-clinical images (IVIS, μ CT, mPET and MRI scanner etc) for all species showing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>the outside of the animal</u> and looks like a photo (see example below); or 2. <u>an implant or probe</u>. 	Yes
Diagnostic or pre-clinical images (IVIS, μ CT, mPET and MRI scanner etc) that are not NHP and do not show : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. outside of the animals and look like a photo; or 2. an implant or probe. 	No

4 Guidelines

4.1 Principles

- 4.1.1 Visual or audio documentation (e.g. photos, videos etc) of ANY live animals or carcasses, should be made only when necessary for data analysis, presentation and publications.
- 4.1.2 Separate IACUC approvals are needed for:
 - a. **taking visual or audio recordings; and**

During protocol review, IACUC must approve the use of any device to document sounds, photographs, or video recordings of animals or animal use areas. This includes visual and audio documentation in investigator laboratories and procedure rooms, classrooms, and vivaria.

IACUC must approve CM and Satellite Facility SOPs describing the use of photography, videography, or audio recording for operational and care activities.

b. use of these recordings for publications and/or sharing with the general public.

Separate approval must be obtained from the IACUC (by submitting an email request) before sharing any photos, videos, or audio documentation of animals or animal use areas with any non-laboratory members. This includes for publication in a scientific journal, use in a classroom setting, presentation to scientific colleagues or for a feature report by the media.

Interviews, filming, or photo shoots using animals or done in areas where animals are housed or used requires:

1. prior permission and approval from both IACUC and the Unit managing the facility; and
2. notification of the Institutional Official and Office of University Communications.

4.1.3 IACUC provided sign (see Annex A) stating that “*visual and audio documentation is prohibited unless approved by IACUC*” must be posted in investigator laboratories, procedure rooms and classrooms.

4.1.4 For research animals not owned by the PI (e.g. photographs of research animals belonging to other PIs for use on websites of imaging facilities or in conference presentations), written consent from the animal owner must also be obtained **prior to**:

1. the non-animal-owner PI incorporating such visual or audio documentation into his/her IACUC protocol; and
2. any visual or audio documentation being taken or published.

4.1.5 For animals not owned by the University (e.g. privately owned pets involved in research studies), written consent from the animal owner must also be obtained prior to any visual or audio documentation being taken or published. The consent document must be reviewed and legally cleared by the Office of Legal Affairs prior to use.

4.2 Recording

4.2.1 Visual or audio documentation may only be performed by personnel listed in the IACUC approved protocol or IACUC approved facility SOP/policy as appropriate.

4.2.2 A dedicated (non-personal) camera or recording device should be used for the documentation. Where a dedicated camera or recording device is not available, a dedicated storage device such as a memory card, recording tape, USB flash drive, or external hard drive should be used.

Cell phones are not allowed to be used to photograph research animals or animal use areas. This prohibition includes cell phones without SIM cards and/or connection to WIFI etc.

4.2.3 To avoid the risk of theft and misuse of these materials, they must be produced with absolute attention to professional conduct and concern for animal welfare.

4.2.4 In general, when taking photos or videos, ensure:

- a. Personnel are wearing all required personal protective equipment (PPE) and modelling proper handling and restraint methods;
- b. Experimental procedures are performed according to approved protocol;
- c. Surroundings are clean, and any images of cages, tanks or pens show clean accessories, full water bottles and stocked feed containers;
- d. Only animals of concern and its enclosure should be shown. Surrounding cage/tanks should be excluded;

- e. Images of animal lesions or experimental research alterations only show the area of interest; and whenever possible, other parts of the animal are excluded; and
- f. The faces of staff in the images are not identifiable.

4.3 Storage and disposal of the visual and audio documentation

- 4.3.1 The devices used to take photos or recordings and the photos and recordings taken must be stored securely, in a locked, unmarked cabinet. Cabinets constructed of materials that allow visualization (e.g., glass) are considered inappropriate for this purpose. For devices and data that cannot be stored in the cabinet, they must be securely stored with restricted access and accessible by approved personnel only.
- 4.3.2 The recordings should be transferred to and stored on an official, institutional, secured and password protected device as soon as possible. The original recording should be deleted from the recording device immediately following transfer.
- 4.3.3 When no longer required, the soft copies of visual and/or audio documentation should be deleted permanently from the storage devices and hard copies shredded before final disposal, in accordance with the [NUS Data Management Policy](#) and [Research Data Management Policy](#).

4.4 Exceptions for Whistleblowing and Reporting to NUS IACUC

- 4.4.1 Notwithstanding the restrictions outlined in this Policy, an exception is granted for the purpose of whistleblowing and reporting of alleged non-compliance, animal welfare concerns, or misconduct to NUS IACUC.
- 4.4.2 Individuals may take photographs or audio-visual recordings of research animals or animal use areas solely for the purpose of reporting concerns in good faith to NUS IACUC.
- 4.4.3 Individuals acting in good faith under this exception are:
 - a. assured that reports will be handled confidentially and reasonable and practical steps will be taken to protect their identities.
 - b. protected from reprisals under the [NUS Whistleblowing Policy](#) and [NUS Code and Procedures for Academic and Research Integrity](#).
 - c. not be subjected to retaliation or disciplinary action.
- 4.4.4 Any photographs or recordings obtained under this exception:
 - a. Must be limited to what is reasonably necessary to substantiate the concern being reported; and
 - b. Must only be used strictly for reporting and investigation purposes. Any transmission, sharing, or use for other purposes is prohibited, including sharing or distribution via social media, messaging platforms, or any other electronic or non-electronic media.
- 4.4.5 The whistleblower is responsible for ensuring that the documentation is handled securely and shared only with NUS IACUC .
- 4.4.6 Once the whistleblowing case has been formally concluded, and where no further retention is required by law or oversight bodies, the whistleblower shall be required to delete and permanently dispose of all photographs or recordings obtained under this exception.

- 4.4.7 This exception applies only to actions taken in good faith. Abuse of this provision, including unauthorized dissemination or use of recordings outside the scope of whistleblowing, shall be subject to institutional review and corrective action.

4.5 Exemption for Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) and Incident Investigations

- 4.5.1 Visual and/or audio recordings may be taken solely for internal IACUC Office use during PAM activities and/or incident investigations, for documentation purposes only. Such recordings may be shared with the IACUC when necessary but must not be shared with other parties unless approved by the IACUC.
- 4.5.2 The relevant animal facility (e.g. DBS or CM) must be informed prior to any recording being taken.
- 4.5.3 Requirements relating to the use of recording devices, data security, storage, transfer, retention, disposal, and reporting of loss or theft are detailed in IACUC SOP-014 Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM).

5 Related documents/SOPs

1. IACUC SOP-014 Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM)
2. [NUS Policies Relating to University Intellectual Property](#)
3. [Public Communications and Publications Policy](#)
4. [NUS Data Management Policy](#)
5. [Research Data Management Policy](#)
6. [CM SOP 709 "Image Capturing and Sharing for CM Operational and Care Activities"](#)
7. [NUS Whistleblowing Policy](#)
8. [NUS Code and Procedures for Academic and Research Integrity](#)

No.	Revision	Author	IACUC approval date
1.	Created on	Dr Foo Tet Wei, John	14 August 2013
2.	P210.01. Revisions to:	IACUC Designated Reviewers	15 January 2024
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. update the format of the policy to be consistent with the latest format; 2. update the title of the policy from "VISUAL AND AUDIO DOCUMENTATION OF ANIMAL USE" to "VISUAL AND AUDIO DOCUMENTATION OF RESEARCH ANIMALS AND ANIMAL USE AREAS"; 3. include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. policy statements on posting on social media sites or sharing via messaging apps and electronic media; b. table showing the types of visual documentation that does and does not require IACUC approval; c. photos, video and audio recordings of animal use areas such as animal facilities and procedure rooms in the scope of the policy; d. signage requirements in IACUC approved procedure rooms and the IACUC approved signage in Annex A; 4. make clear separate IACUC review and approvals are needed for (1) taking visual and audio recordings and (2) using them for publication and presentation; 5. indicate visual or audio documentation must be performed by personnel listed under the IACUC approved protocol or IACUC approved facility SOP/policy as appropriate; 6. include points PI should take note of when taking photos or videos; 7. specify researcher who takes the photo or video must ensure the recordings are securely stored and accessible by approved personnel only.; 8. emphasize that the recordings should be transferred and stored on an official, institutional, secured and password protected device as soon as possible. 	AV and CM vets Dr Chew Li Li	
3.	P210.02. Revisions to:	Dr Chew Li Li	7 Mar 2025

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1. make clear that IACUC review and approval of photos, videos and sound recording taken under an observational study that is exempted from IACUC review and approval is needed before they can be used for publication or sharing with the public.
2. Add Annex B: Observational Study checklist for PI
4. **P210.03.** Revisions to:
 1. clarifies the requirement for owner consent before documenting animals not owned by the PI or University.
 2. aligned data disposal practices with institutional requirements.
 3. include (1) exception for whistleblowing and regulatory reporting (section 4.4) and (2) exemption for PAM and Incident Investigation (section 4.5).

IACUC Designated 15 June 2026
Reviewers
Dr Chew Li Li
Ms Keh Lee Hwei

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Approved

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Annex A: Signage for IACUC approved and AVS licensed procedure rooms



Annex B: Observational Study checklist for PI

For researchers to determine whether your research will be classified as observational study that is exempted from IACUC review and approval.

All photos, videos and sound recordings of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, non-human mammals and cephalopods, including carcasses, must be reviewed and approved by IACUC before they are used for any types of publications and/or sharing with the general public. This will include use of photos, videos and sound recordings taken under an observational study exempted from IACUC review and approval. Please refer to [IACUC policy P210 Visual and Audio Documentation of Research Animals and Animal Use Areas](#) for details.

(A)	There will be observation of animals, without any type of interaction with them and/or manipulation of their environment, in this study. <i>Please proceed to section (B) below if live fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, non-human mammals or cephalopods will be observed for the study.</i>	Yes ☐	No ☐
(B)	Does the observational study involve:	Yes	No
	1. making observations from a distance of less than 50m between the animals and any researcher or their equipment (including drones)?	☐	☐
	2. disturbance to driftwood, rock crevices, in between coral formations, in/under sand or mud, inter-tidal safe havens, vegetation and undergrowth, employed to flush birds and animals out from their concealed positions?	☐	☐
	3. chasing, cornering or surrounding animals for the purposes of getting a good glimpse/visual examination or good recordings?	☐	☐
	4. playback of recordings, creation of sounds/noise and other methods to attract, startle, distract, alarm, spook or frighten animals?	☐	☐
	5. feeding or baiting of animals to attract or encourage them to take up more “research friendly” positions?	☐	☐
	6. restrain of animals such as applying bird lime or other adhesives on branches that birds normally land on, preventing birds from changing positions, use of restraints such as wire and string to prevent birds from flying away? Important note: Such acts of cruelty cannot be condoned and must not be performed under any circumstances without proper ethical review and approval.	☐	☐
	7. posting and exposure of roosting or nesting locations before the young are fully fledged, or, handling, defacing or structurally altering nests or nesting locations?	☐	☐
	8. intentional/manipulation to disturbed, agitated or stress animals? 9. acts which could result in: a. disturbance caused to the animals, b. physical damage caused to the animal, its environment or its dwellings, c. the animals experiencing stress or anxiety, d. consequential predation, e. reduced reproductive success, or f. a negative impact on the well-being and survival of these animals or other species?	☐	☐
	If you have answered “Yes” to any question in section (B) above —————→ <u>Protocol submission* for IACUC review and approval needed.</u>		

*Please check with the [IACUC Office](#) if in doubt. Researchers are also encourage to familiarize themselves with the, [Nature Photographic Society, Singapore, Code of Ethics in the Field](#) and [Singapore’s wildlife protection laws](#).