The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Policy on Adoption of Companion Animals

The IACUC strongly encourages all investigators to pursue adoption of companion animals as pets when they are no longer appropriate for research and teaching. However, the IACUC recognizes that adoption cannot be accomplished for all companion animals, nor is it deemed appropriate for animals with certain health conditions or those exposed to experimental conditions that could potentially jeopardize that animal’s health status or ability to thrive in a new environment.

It is the responsibility of investigators working with companion animals to determine whether adoption is feasible (e.g., adoption may be appropriate for one healthy animal in a litter, but not for the entire litter).

- The decision regarding adoption of specific companion animals should take into consideration:
  - the current health status of the animal
  - the likelihood of the animal developing specific health conditions consistent with its genetic background
  - its behavioral phenotype (e.g., aggressive behavior)
  - its exposure to various experimental conditions that may compromise its health or behavior

- All species are eligible for adoption except those which are venomous, genetically modified, endangered and/or non-human primates.

- Investigators are responsible for selecting and evaluating potential adopting owners, assuring the completion the Adoption Agreement form, and for ensuring that prospective owners complete an UNC-CH IACUC Adoption Agreement form detailing their responsibilities as a potential owner.

- DLAM (Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine) must be included in the process of this determination.

1. For adoption to occur, the following conditions must be met:
   a) Individuals seeking approval to adopt an animal must agree to care for the animal in a manner which is generally accepted as appropriate for a companion species.
   b) The adopting party must agree not to use the animal as a food source or sell the adopted animal to markets for meat consumption.
   c) Adoption must be listed as a method of disposition on the approved IACUC protocol from which the animal will be removed.
2. Investigators should ensure that all animals to be adopted are appropriately neutered.
3. Investigators must ensure that all animals to be adopted receive a DLAM Veterinary physical examination prior to adoption.

Species specific requirements:
   a. Rodents: Normal physical examination, no evidence of disease
   b. Dogs, cats, rabbits: neutered within 30 days of adoption (6 months of age for kittens and puppies), normal examination with no evidence of disease, and all applicable vaccinations.
   c. Other animals: If applicable, neutered within 30 days of adoption, normal examination with no evidence of disease and all applicable vaccinations.
4. NIH Guidelines do not allow for the field release of any animal that has been administered recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid molecules unless an appropriate Federal agency has authorized such a release.
5. NIH Guidelines state that grant funds issued through the NIH cannot be used to support the adoption process. Consequently, the IACUC strongly encourages investigators to secure other funds for the care of companion animals prior to initiating the adoption process. Investigators will be responsible for all housing and care costs for animals they wish to offer for adoption until placed in a new home. Investigators should consult with the IACUC, EHS, DLAM, and/or UNC’s legal department in instances in which an adoption may be inconsistent with this policy.
6. Animals will only be adopted if the adoption represents no threat to the public or animal health or welfare, or the integrity of the University.
7. A UNC-CH Adoption Agreement form must be completed by the adopting individual and can be obtained from the Office of Animal Care and Use or DLAM.

For questions or concerns, please contact the Office and Animal Care and Use, 966-5569 or iacuc@med.unc.edu