

Policy Regarding the Use of Random-Source Animals for Research at the University of Vermont

The University of Vermont recognizes that the use of random-source animals for research purposes poses unique challenges to the Institutional Care and Use Committee (IACUC). This is particularly true when the species utilized are those which society traditionally regards as companion animals, such as dogs and cats.

Random-source animals are those which are procured from animal pounds or shelters, auctions, or any person who did not breed or raise the animals on his or her premises. Non-random source is a term used to describe animals which are bred and raised on the premises of an individual, such as a hobby breeder, although the animals are not purpose-bred for research and testing. A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Class B licensed dealer may procure animals from random or non-random sources, while a USDA Class A licensed dealer produces purpose-bred animals on his/her own premises which are subsequently sold for research or testing purposes.

Because the genetic and medical history of random-source animals is largely unknown, potential health and animal welfare problems may be associated with their use. It may be difficult for the IACUC to ascertain that animals have been reared, housed and transported under appropriate humane conditions. In addition, random-source animals may contribute unanticipated variation in scientific results due to their varied breed, medical status and prior standards of care.

Because of the potential animal welfare and scientific concerns associated with random source animals or animals procured from USDA Class B licensed dealers, the IACUC at the University of Vermont requires that investigators procure purpose-bred animals only from USDA Class A licensed dealers. This policy shall not apply to agricultural animals, to amphibians, or to wildlife species used in field studies.

Reference:

Scientific and Humane Issues in the Use of Random Source Dogs and Cats in Research. National Research Council (US) Committee on Scientific and Humane Issues in the Use of Random Source Dogs and Cats in Research. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2009. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK32675/>