



## A. PURPOSE

To provide guidance on the use of cervical dislocation and decapitation as a method of euthanasia for select species.

## B. GUIDELINES

The IACUC follows the recommendations of the *AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals, 2020* edition or newer, for euthanasia of research animals. If animals will be euthanized as part of an IACUC protocol, investigators should use the acceptable methods of euthanasia outlined in this document.

Conditionally acceptable methods of euthanasia may be approved, but only if all conditions are met.

Two conditionally acceptable methods of euthanasia are cervical dislocation or decapitation, **when performed without anesthesia**. Note that, cervical dislocation and decapitation are acceptable euthanasia methods if the animal is first anesthetized.

### Cervical dislocation without anesthesia

- This method of euthanasia may be used in small birds, poultry, mice, immature rats (weighing < 200 g) and rabbits.
- For IACUC approval of this method in **unanaesthetized** animals, protocol participants must be properly trained and capable of consistently applying this technique humanely and effectively, as described in the AVMA Guidelines. At least one protocol participant must be trained by a UAC veterinarian or their designee to ensure proper technique. That individual will then be responsible for training additional protocol participants in the appropriate methodology. The principal investigator may also choose to have all protocol participants trained by the veterinary trainer.
- Protocol participants transferring from another institution may provide proof of training from that institution to the veterinary trainer. The protocol participant will be required to display competency in the method to the veterinary trainer.

### Decapitation without anesthesia

- This method of euthanasia may be used in laboratory rodents, rabbits, poultry, birds, some finfish, amphibians and reptiles.
- For IACUC approval of this method in **unanaesthetized** animals, protocol participants must be properly trained and capable of consistently applying this technique humanely and effectively, as described in the AVMA Guidelines. At least one protocol participant must be trained by a UAC veterinarian or their designee to ensure proper technique (excludes altricial rodents <7 days of age). That individual will then be responsible for training additional protocol participants in the appropriate methodology. The principal investigator may also choose to have all protocol participants trained by the veterinary trainer.
- Protocol participants transferring from another institution may provide proof of training from that institution to the veterinary trainer. The protocol participant will be required to display competency in the method to the veterinary trainer.
- Appropriate guillotines must be used for decapitation. One exception is that decapitation with scissors or a sharp blade is conditionally acceptable for altricial neonatal rodents (< 7 days of age). Guillotines used for decapitation without anesthesia must be maintained as described in Guidance 303 Maintenance of Guillotines.



**C. REFERENCES, MATERIALS, AND/OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- [AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals](#)
- <https://research.arizona.edu/compliance/IACUC/policies-procedures-and-guidelines> for I-IC-GU-303  
Guillotine Maintenance and Use