

Opportunistic Sampling, Vouchering and Amendments to Projects in the Field Policy

Intent

When working in the field, the AEC realises that investigators may, at times, need to make minor amendments to their AEC approval but may not be in a position to contact the AEC or to wait for formal approval to be granted. In these circumstances, it may be acceptable to go ahead without receiving formal approval. This policy outlines situations when it is acceptable to make such amendments and request retrospective AEC approval as soon as they are able to do so.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Researchers working in the field with wildlife or aquatic animals or on livestock field trials
- Situations that may occur when conducting field work, where it is not possible to contact the AEC, but where decisions made may be a breach of an AEC approval
- The AEC when assessing retrospective amendments to projects

Definitions

Voucher specimen	means any specimen, usually but not always a dead animal, that serves as a basis of study and is retained as a reference.
Type specimen	means a particular voucher specimen that serves as a basis for taxonomic description of that subspecies.

Policy

1. Situations where amendments to AEC approvals made in the field are considered justified to the AEC include:

- 1.1. The animal is suspected of being a new species
- 1.2. The information may never be available again
- 1.3. The information may prove to be invaluable to the species survival
- 1.4. The activity complies with the investigator's Department of Environment and Heritage permits and relevant legislation
- 1.5. The amendment is reported as soon as possible after the activity to the AEC, and an amendment submitted for a retrospective approval, which outlines the reasons why approval was not requested before the activity
- 1.6. The animal is by-catch as long as by-catch is kept to a minimum and reported in the animal usage

2. Approved activities include:

- 2.1. Change of species of animal to a related species with similar conservation status
- 2.2. Observational activities and photography
- 2.3. Collection of samples by approved methods
- 2.4. Taking measurements and minimally invasive physical examination

- 2.5. Non-destructive examination of an animal's environment
- 2.6. Temporary holding and short distance transportation
- 2.7. Call playback and recording
- 2.8. Identification – banding, PIT tagging, tagging, marking by acceptable methods for that species
- 2.9. Vouchering
- 3. Activities not approved:**
 - 3.1. Invasive procedures
 - 3.2. Inappropriate or unacceptable methods for that species
- 4. Taking a voucher specimen (vouchering):**
 - 4.1. It may be necessary when in the field for an investigator to come across a new, rare species that would justify them taking the animal as a voucher specimen without the activity being approved by the AEC. In these circumstances it may be considered, justified by the AEC to voucher the animal.
- 5. Situations where vouchering an animal would be considered justified by the AEC:**
 - 5.1. Verification of identification – because field identification is difficult, or a species cannot be identified in the field
 - 5.2. Confirmation of distribution
 - 5.3. Where significant range extensions are suspected
 - 5.4. Biodiversity surveys where a permanent record of fauna is desired
 - 5.5. For a revision of taxonomy
 - 5.6. A new species is suspected
 - 5.7. Collection of a type specimen
- 6. When a voucher specimen is taken, it must be done according to the following:**
 - 6.1. With consideration of the 3Rs
 - 6.1.1. Alternatives to collecting animals as voucher specimens (e.g. tissue samples, digital photography) must be considered, where appropriate
 - 6.1.2. The minimum number of animals are taken
 - 6.1.3. The most humane methods are used, and preferably the animal being killed as soon as is possible
 - 6.2. The animal is killed by an acceptable and humane method
 - 6.3. It will result in minimal effect on species conservation or survival
 - 6.4. All samples will be processed correctly and become part of a publicly available reference collection
 - 6.5. Details of the location must be kept

Related policy instruments

None

Schedules/Appendices

None

Related documents and legislation

JCU Animal Ethics Committee Application to Amend a Project

NSW Animal Research Review Panel Guideline: Opportunistic research on free-living wildlife

Administration

Approval Details

Policy Sponsor	Animal Welfare Officer
Approval Authority	Animal Ethics Committee
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Revision History

Version	Approval date	Implementation date	Details	Author
1.0	02/06/2017	05/06/2017	Posted to AEC website	Craig Godfrey, Animal Welfare Officer

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