



IACUC SOP:	SOP Field Studies	
SOP#117.00	IACUC Approved: 10/16/2026	IO Approval: 10/27/2026

Purpose:

This SOP describes the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review process for research and teaching activities involving non-domesticated, vertebrate animals and cephalopods in their natural habitat, hereinafter referred to as “field studies”, conducted under the auspices of Texas A&M University-San Antonio (A&M-SA).

Background:

A&M-SA is dedicated to maintaining the highest standards for animal care and use in research and teaching activities including those involving free-ranging wildlife, while ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, policies, and regulations. Field studies have a unique set of requirements to be considered compared to research conducted in a laboratory or captive setting. This includes acquisition of local, state, and federal collecting permits, as appropriate; consideration of zoonoses and other hazards associated with wildlife; and challenges of working in a field setting. Intramurally, field studies must obtain either IACUC approval or an exemption.

Policy:

1. Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator

1.1 Permits

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for acquiring and maintaining all necessary permits, including federal, state, and local approvals before the field study can start.

1.2 Training

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for providing the field site training and related documents to all team members. This training includes at a minimum:

- Risks and hazards associated with the field site and species collected
- Approved field research safety plan
- Potential risks encountered in the field (snakes, spiders, vermin, etc.)
- Any required vaccinations or prophylactic medications necessary
- Training in handling the target species and procedures in the protocol

The PI is responsible for maintaining all necessary documentation.

1.3 Submission of Materials for IACUC Review

Prior to conducting any field studies, the PI must submit the field study Animal Use Protocol (AUP) AND receive IACUC approval or obtain an exemption letter from the IACUC Office.

1.4 Review Process

- All applications will be subject to administrative pre-review to determine if the study requires IACUC approval or not.
- IACUC Exemption Process for Exempt Activities*
Purely observational studies, in which animals are not manipulated for research purposes and



their environment is not intentionally affected in a way that could alter the animal's behavior, are typically exempt from IACUC review.

Examples of Exempt Activities:

- Observational studies without interaction with animals.
 - Placement of camera traps **without** baits to assess species occurrence.
 - Opportunistic noninvasive sample collection without animal contact or baiting (e.g., hair or fecal sample collection from the environment).
- c. *IACUC Review and Approval Process for Non-Exempt Activities* When the protocol has procedures that involve manipulation of the animal or intentionally manipulating their environment, they will require IACUC approval.

Examples of Non-Exempt Activities:

- Capturing animals by any means (trapping, darting, mist netting, etc.) for research- or teaching-related purposes.
- Baiting an area to monitor wildlife reaction.
- IACUC approval is required by the funding agency.

After an initial review of field studies application by the IACUC office, the application will be forwarded to IACUC Chair, or Designee or AV to confirm the findings. If the field study meets criteria for exemption from IACUC review, then an exemption letter will be issued. The letter can be used as needed for publication or dissertation purposes.

If the scope of work changes and requires manipulation of animals or their environment, then an animal use protocol will need to be submitted and approved prior to initiating the procedures.

2. Semiannual Oversight of Wildlife Field Studies

Wildlife field studies approved by the IACUC shall be subject to continuing oversight consistent with the institution's semiannual IACUC program evaluation and inspection requirements.

The IACUC shall determine the appropriate method and frequency of oversight based upon the nature of the field study, animal procedures, duration of animal holding, location, potential for animal pain or distress, personnel and environmental risks, and other relevant circumstances.

Where appropriate, oversight may include an in-person site visit, remote site review, review of photographs or video, review of field records, post-approval monitoring, interviews with research personnel, or other methods determined by the IACUC.

An in-person site visit should be conducted at least every six months when a field study includes a defined, accessible field facility or other location where animals are housed or held for more than 12 hours, unless the IACUC determines that an alternative oversight mechanism is appropriate and adequately addresses animal welfare and compliance.

For mobile, seasonal, geographically dispersed, or otherwise inaccessible field studies, the IACUC may satisfy continuing oversight through documented alternative monitoring methods.

Purely observational activities that qualify for exemption under this SOP are not subject to routine semiannual field-site inspection unless otherwise determined by the IACUC.

3. Responsibilities of the IACUC

The IACUC is responsible for ensuring compliance with this SOP and for overseeing its implementation.



References

1. National Research Council, 2011. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#). 8th Edition. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC.
2. [2016 Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists for the use of wild mammals in research and education \(ndsu.edu\)](#)
3. The Ornithological Council, 2010. [Guidelines to The Use of Wild Birds in Research](#). 3rd Edition. The Ornithological Council, Washington, DC.
4. [Guidelines for Use of Live Amphibians and Reptiles in Field and Laboratory Research](#)

History:

Version 01 - Initial Approval: 4/14/2023; IO approved 4/20/2023

Version 02- 7/20/2026; IO approved 08/26/2026

Version 03- 10/16/2026; IO approved 10/27/2026