**Adoption of Research Animals**

Last Reviewed: December 14, 2023

**I. Purpose**

This policy provides guidelines for the adoption of research animals from the University of Montana (UM).

**II. Background**

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching* discuss the termination of research animals at the conclusion of the research project. However, the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals,* *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching,*the PHS Policy, and the Animal Welfare Act are silent on the issue of private adoption of research animals for pets after a study has been completed or the animals are no longer required for teaching. The *9 CFR* recordkeeping regulations and official policies offer institutions the option of developing and implementing an adoption policy. The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) and the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine is supportive of the adoption of research animals.

**III. Position Statement**

The University of Montana strongly encourages investigators to pursue the adoption of species appropriate as pets when they are no longer required for research or teaching. However, the IACUC recognizes that adoption cannot be accomplished for all research animals, nor is it deemed appropriate for animals with certain health conditions or those exposed to experimental conditions that could potentially jeopardize the animal's health status or ability to thrive in a new environment. Wild mammal colonies housed long-term may only be adopted by American Zoological Association certified facilities. It is the responsibility of the investigators working with companion animals to determine whether adoption is feasible. The adoption of an animal is at the discretion of the Attending Veterinarian. For a research animal to be eligible for adoption, the following conditions must be met:

1. The animal must be in good health and of acceptable behavior.
2. If any drugs (FDA- approved human or veterinary) have been administered to the
animal, the drug should be disclosed to the potential adopter.
3. Animals exposed to infectious agents are ineligible for adoption.
4. Transgenic or immune-suppressed animals are not eligible for adoption.
5. Animals must be adopted as personal or family pets only and may not be sold or
given away after adoption.
6. Animals may not be used for food (human or animal consumption).
7. The adopter is responsible for any future medical care/support that may be required.
8. Investigators are responsible for selecting potential adopting owners.
9. Investigators must ensure that all animals are appropriately neutered if animals are being adopted as multi-sexed pairs (this may occur at UM at the discretion of the Attending Veterinarian).
10. The adopter is responsible for providing appropriate transport caging for an animal
being adopted.

**IV. Procedures**

The IACUC recommends the following set of procedures:

1. The Principal Investigator (PI) must first indicate that the animal is not needed for
research, state that s/he has no knowledge of any fact that would make the animal(s) inappropriate for adoption, and recommend the animal be offered for adoption. If the PI is aware of any conditions that may have an impact on the animal's suitability as a pet, this must be disclosed to the potential adopter.
2. The UM Attending Veterinarian will conduct a physical exam of the animal. A copy of the physical exam results will be retained on file and a copy furnished to the prospective owner.
3. If an individual indicates an interest in adopting an animal, the Attending Veterinarian will meet with that individual and conduct an interview and the UM Questionnaire for Animal Adoption will be filled out to determine the reasons for adoption and the person's willingness and ability to provide for the animal's welfare.
4. A LAR transfer form will be filled out by the PI transferring the ownership of the animal to the new owner.
5. For USDA-regulated species, form 7020 ("Record of Disposition of Animals other than Dogs and Cats") must be completed by the PI and given to the IACUC Coordinator. The form may be obtained from this link:
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/library/forms/pdf/aph7020.pdf>
6. The individual desiring to adopt the animal should complete and sign an UM Animal Adoption Agreement form (attached Appendix II). The original copy of this agreement will be retained by LAR as well as a copy given to the owner as proof of ownership transfer.
7. On the day the UM Animal Adoption Agreement is signed, the animal will be transferred from the University of Montana facilities to the new owner. Once the animal leaves the facility it is the possession of its new owner and the University of Montana will no longer be responsible for the animal, its care or any damage it may cause.

**Appendix I**

**University of Montana Animal Adoption Agreement**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, am adopting the animal described below from the University of Montana Department of Laboratory Animal Resources, and agree to be fully responsible for its future care, treatment, actions, and well- being.

The animal described below has been examined by University of Montana veterinarian
(Dr. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ) and has been determined to appear to be both clinically healthy and suitable as a companion animal except as noted below. I acknowledge and agree that (just as with any physical examination), this does not guarantee that the animal to be adopted has no health issues, but that none are known based upon that examination.

I have been given a copy of the University of Montana “Animal Adoption Agreement.” Having read this document, I attest that I understand the terms under which I take ownership of this animal and agree to comply with all the conditions of adoption. Additionally, I have had an opportunity to ask any health and husbandry-related questions, and each question has been answered to my satisfaction.

In accepting this animal, I agree to care for it in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations of my place of residence, including but not limited to having the animal spayed or neutered if applicable, vaccinated as appropriate and registering the animal with local animal control officials as required. I further agree not to use this animal as a food source (for humans or other animals) or religious object or for any commercial purpose, including but not limited to breeding and exhibiting. I will not sell this animal or relinquish this animal to a shelter or rescue organization, nor will I release the animal into the wild.

By signing this agreement, I acknowledge, and I hereby release and indemnify the University of Montana, its trustees, officers, employees, and agents from any liability, claims, and expenses resulting from this adoption. I understand that the University of Montana is not liable for the animal’s continuing care or veterinary treatment, or for any damages arising from my ownership of the animal once it has been removed from the University of Montana facility.

**New owner: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**University of Montana Attending Veterinarian Signature:**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**