

## **The workings of the Animal Care and Ethics Committee-** ACEC Presiding Officer, Geoff Dutton

Many of you may already know what the Charles Sturt University Animal Care and Ethics Committee (CSU ACEC) is and how we are structured but many may not. You may see us as just another form to fill in and a hassle but this is not really so, we are here to help believe it or not. Many of you that already work with animals in teaching and research will realise that happy animals will ultimately give good outcomes, but who is at the end of that seemingly endless form filling.

Well, the CSU ACEC was established in accordance with the provisions of the Animal Research Act 1985 and Animal Research Regulation 1995. Fair enough about the legal side, but who looks at your applications? Well it is not just one person but a committee so it is not just a single person's decision if your application is accepted or not. How are they qualified to assess my application well they are as follows:

- The Presiding Officer; me, Geoff Dutton.
- Three members with qualifications in veterinary science and with experience relevant to the activities of the institution.
- Three members (preferably with higher degrees in research) with substantial recent experience in the use of animals in research or teaching activities.
- Three members with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, animal welfare and who are not employees of CSU or involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.
- Three members who are independent of the University and who have never been involved in the use of animals in research or teaching activities as defined by the Code of Practice, either in their employment or beyond their undergraduate education.

### **So the committee assesses applications but what else does the committee do for me or the university?**

Well they:

- approve guidelines for the care of animals that are bred, held and used for scientific purposes on behalf of the University;
- monitor the acquisition, transportation, production, housing, care, use and fate of animals;
- recommend to the University any measures needed to ensure that the standards of the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes are maintained;
- require that all members declare any conflict of interest;

- examine and approve, approve subject to modification, or reject written proposals relevant to the use of animals for scientific purposes;
- approve only those studies for which animals are essential and justified and which conform to the requirements of the Code. This should take into consideration factors including ethics, the impact on the animal or animals and the anticipation scientific or educational value;
- withdraw approval for any project;
- authorise the emergency treatment or euthanasia of any animal, if necessary;
- examine and comment on all institutional plans and policies that may affect the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes;
- maintain a record of proposals and projects;
- maintain minutes that record decisions and other aspects of the Committee's operation;
- comply with the reporting requirements of the University and the Code of Practice as follows:
  - submit a written report on its activities at least annually to the University Council;
  - deal with instances of non-compliance with the Code to ensure that the processes are fair and effective, and that there is appropriate reporting to the University;
  - refer irreconcilable differences between the Committee and an investigator or teacher to the University Council for review of the due process. The ultimate decision of the Committee after such review must not be overridden;
  - perform all other duties imposed by the Act or the Regulations, including the Code of Practice prescribed under the Regulation

All too much? Well next time we will give you some hints maybe on how to make your life and that of the committee easier. ACEC Presiding Officer, Geoff Dutton