

IACUC Policy for Inspection of USC Animal Facilities by Non-USC Personnel

Purpose: To establish guidelines on visits to USC animal holding facilities by personnel not directly involved with animal care or use, or not affiliated with the University.

Background:

1. The University accepts an ethical and scientific responsibility to provide humanely for the welfare of all animals used in education and research at USC. The University recognizes that the public has a concern for the welfare and well-being of the animals, and that members of the university, representatives of the public such as media organizations, and individual citizens may desire to visit the animal holding facilities to observe animal care activities.
2. The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) has oversight over the care and use of animals at the University. The IACUC membership includes at least one community member who is not affiliated with the university to represent the concerns and interests of the local community. It also includes a veterinarian trained in laboratory animal medicine and non-scientist members.
3. The IACUC reviews the animal care program and inspects the facilities semi-annually as required by law. Maintenance of an unlimited open door policy in the animal facilities is not compatible with good animal husbandry or research. Many animals are sensitive to changes in their daily routine; therefore, the presence of strangers may cause them physiological stress. Research projects frequently require close control of variables.
4. Changes in routine or unusual occurrences can cause changes in blood pressure, hormone levels, and other parameters, which may confuse research data. Most USC animals are bred and cared for under strict hygienic conditions to maintain their disease-free status.
5. Visitors may inadvertently introduce bacteria or viruses into the animal facility, which could compromise the disease-free state. Some animals may carry zoonotic organisms, which may be dangerous to humans; therefore, access to these animals is strictly limited.

Policy:

1. The University allows access to the animal facilities to responsible groups and individuals on a limited basis. Special visits may be arranged at the discretion of the University. All visitors are eligible for enrollment in the Occupational Health and Safety Program. Information on this program will be provided prior to entry into the animal facility. If visitors decline to enroll in the program, they must sign a waiver acknowledging awareness of the program and understanding of the health risks inherent to an animal facility prior to entry.
2. To reduce potential stress to animals and disruption of activities, visits to the animal facilities will normally be scheduled in conjunction with semi-annual inspections by the IACUC, immediately preceding or following the IACUC. Group size may be limited and it may not be possible to honor all requests during one tour.

3. Requests to visit the facilities should be submitted in writing to the USC Veterinarian, the IACUC Chair, or the Institutional Official, who will coordinate the request and visit.
4. Areas such as the biohazard containment area are not open to the public for safety reasons.