# Maximising the Chance of First Time Approval

**How to optimise your application for approval**

It is highly recommended that prior to submission; you discuss your application with your Faculty/Institutional or Centre Research Ethics Advisor and/or the UQ Animal Welfare Unit.

All researchers should inform themselves of the requirements in *The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (current edition).

Wildlife researchers should read in particular Section 5 (Wildlife Studies) of the Code which makes particular reference to free-living vertebrates and those captured from free-living populations, including native, non-indigenous and vertebrate pest species. It should be read in conjunction with the rest of the Code.

In assessing applications it is often difficult for the UQ AECs to obtain a clear picture of what happens to individual animals from the beginning to the end of the project. The AECs must assess the impact on animals of all procedures and the project as a whole so these details should be provided in a clear and concise manner.

The application should therefore focus on what is happening to the animals and what is being done to ensure their wellbeing. It is important that this information is presented in a way that shows clearly what is happening to the individual animals from the beginning to the completion of a project. The impact of procedures needs to be clearly detailed. The investigator should provide step-by-step examination of all treatments (substances, dose rate, routes, volumes, needle size, anaesthetics, analgesics, surgical procedures etc.) and the expected effects on the animals. In addition, factors that will impact on animals such as housing (type, duration, environmental enrichment, diet) should be considered.

The application should also explain clearly why the use of animal is justified, why the species and number of animals have been chosen and that the qualifications of personnel are suitable for the procedures to be performed.

The AEC must be assured that the 3Rs of animal use (refinement, replacement and reduction) are complied with and that the benefits of the use outweigh the potential costs to the animals. Therefore, your application must convince the AEC that:

* Animal use is essential to achieve the stated goal (i.e. no other means are available);
* The scientific merit of the project justifies the use of animals; and
* The minimum number of animals required to achieve valid data has been proposed for use (in some instances this may actually be more), with the least possible impact on the well-being of animals involved.

It is important for applicants to remember the composition of the AEC. Applications must be written primarily for an interested intelligent person without a scientific background. The use of specialist language without appropriate explanations may delay the approval of an application or see it returned for re writing.

**What are the most common problems with applications that delay approval?**

Common problems with applications that may result in delays to the approval process include:

* The application is submitted on an inappropriate or out of date form - Use the current version of the form downloaded from this site (applies to hard copy only).
* Required signatures are missing - Attach signatures of all project personnel to the application (applies to hard copy only).
* Incorrect number of copies submitted - Check the number of copies required for each AEC prior to submission (applies to hard copy only).
* Missing pages - Double check your application prior to submission (applies to hard copy only).
* The application is not written in plain English and clarification is required. Failing to describe the aims and benefits in simple language prevents the lay members of the AEC being able to assess the remainder of the application - Ensure all specialist language should be replaced or explained.
* The use of animals is not adequately justified or the statistical justification is poorly addressed. (see 1.1 of *The Code* for the criteria used by the AEC in determining if a project is justified and in weighing up the benefits of the project against the potential effects on the animals) - Ensure you appropriately address each of the 3Rs. You may require a biometrician to provide justifications for the numbers proposed.
* The severity of the procedures is not adequately justified.
* The use of non-animal alternatives is not adequately addressed.
* Answers are not provided to ALL questions;
* There is inadequate or insufficient information, especially with respect to procedures, dose rates and monitoring - Provide full details of procedures. When referring to SOPs, indicate the SOP number and title.
* There is a discrepancy between the numbers of animals requested and the description of the experiment(s) in the text of the application.