



Overview of Mystic Aquarium's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

The Aquarium's IACUC is committed to ensuring that all research protocols adhere to the guidelines established by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The Committee meets every six months to discuss ongoing research projects and review newly proposed research projects. Prior to the IACUC's review, a proposal is circulated among an internal review board for comments on scientific merit, animal welfare, and feasibility with regard to husbandry concerns.

A Program of Veterinary Care (PVC) is reviewed annually by the Vice President of Biological Operations and updated as needed. The PVC is kept on file and available to staff and the USDA Veterinary Medical Officer (VMO) upon request. The Committee regularly reviews the institution's programs concerning veterinary medical care, institutional policies and animal housing and support areas. The IACUC members utilize a standard Semiannual IACUC Program Evaluation and Facility Checklist.

Meeting agenda items may also include a discussion of any updates regarding compliance with Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulations or professional accrediting association welfare standards e.g., AZA or The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. IACUC members are provided with training presentations, instructions or discussions from guest speakers during each convened meeting. This information is to specifically address IACUC related duties and functions, e.g., roles of various members, review of the AWA regulations, discussion of protocol review issues or to review the organization's policies and procedures for ensuring the welfare of our animals. These discussions serve as continuing education so our members remain well informed.

The Committee also conducts unannounced inspections of the animal care areas which duplicate the facility inspections by the USDA VMO. Committee tours of the facility are conducted every six months. During an inspection, all items that require action are noted on a Facility Checklist. The checklist is distributed to the appropriate departments/managers for their target dates for corrective action. A copy of the updated checklist is kept on file and made available to the USDA inspecting officials upon request.

The Committee includes a broad range of professional and non-professional people.

Affiliated members:

Fatima Matos, Pfizer Central Research (retired), IACUC Chair
Gayle Sirpenski, B.S., Animal Management Specialist, IACUC Secretary
Tracy Romano, Ph.D., VP of Biological Research & Chief Scientist
Larry Rivarde, Sr, Chief Operating Officer
Allison Tuttle, DVM, Diplomate ACZM, VP of Biological Programs

Non-affiliated members:

Gerald Sonnenfeld, Ph.D., Research Microbiologist and Immunologist

Patricia Bubucis, Pfizer Central Research
Toni O'Connell, Pfizer Central Research
Lawrence Dunn, VMD, Mystic Aquarium Veterinarian Emeritus
Stella Elbaum, Real Estate Agent, William Raveis

While the AWA currently does not oversee the welfare of taxonomic groups such as aquatic birds, fishes and invertebrates used in research, the Aquarium's IACUC has incorporated them into its program of care for collection animals. In an effort to provide associate researchers with current information regarding humane standards in a research setting, the Aquarium has procured the following publications for the research library. These references are made available by the Scientists Center for Animal Welfare (SCAW), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to responsible and humane treatment of animals used in research.

The Well-being of Animals in Zoo and Aquarium Sponsored Research
Wildlife Mammals as Research Models: In the Laboratory and Field
Research Animal Anesthesia, Analgesia and Surgery
The Care and Use of Amphibians, Reptiles and Fish in Research