The Code of Practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (NHMRC, 8th edition, 2013) states that: ‘The AEC monitors the care and use of animals by inspecting animals, animal housing and the conduct of procedures, and/or reviewing records and reports’ (2.3.17 Code of Practice). ‘The AEC should determine the frequency and timing of inspections’ (2.3.21 Code of Practice).

In order to ensure compliance with this requirement of the Code of Practice, the University of Tasmania Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) has implemented a policy of registration and regular inspection of all animal facilities.

The registration of animal holding, experimentation, transportation or breeding facilities, on behalf of the University, is conducted by the Animal Ethics Committee in conjunction with relevant Heads of Schools.

Heads of Schools are required to provide detailed information on all facilities, within their School, used for the care and use of animals as defined by the NHMRC Code of Practice. The AEC will then issue a Facility Agreement for all facilities detailed by the Head of School. Under this Agreement, the Head of School takes responsibility for ensuring compliance of each facility with the Code of Practice and permits the AEC to conduct regular scheduled inspections of the facility and random, unannounced inspections. The Head of School is obliged to inform the AEC of any new facilities in the School.

Inspections of facilities are conducted by an official delegation of the AEC. Heads of Schools will be informed of the date of the inspection at least one month prior to the scheduled inspection date.

Inspections are based on an approved checklist. Heads of Schools are informed of the findings of all inspections within one month of the inspection taking place. If specific recommendations are made by the AEC as a result of the inspection, the Chair may discuss the recommendations directly with the Head of School, and/or may delegate responsibility to the Animal Welfare Officer to liaise with the School.

In certain cases, approval may be given for work to occur ‘in the field’ or at other research venues if the AEC can be satisfied that the venue (and transportation, if required) meets required standards. In the case of field work, the Animal Welfare Officer may monitor the work and may provide input as to the appropriateness of the location/facilities.

If you would like to make comment, on this, or any other AEC policy, please contact the AEC Secretary on 6226 7283 or email animal.ethics@utas.edu.au