

# **Aquaculture/Fisheries Center**

## **Animal Welfare Policy 2005**

The faculty, staff, and students of the UAPB Aquaculture/Fisheries Center conduct scientific research using living animals and recognize that the welfare of those animals is of paramount importance both for ethical reasons and to insure the quality of research results. In order to insure that animal welfare concerns are adequately addressed, all research done at the Center adheres to the following principles.

- 1) Fish are animals and must be treated with care and respect.
- 2) While there is significant scientific evidence showing that fish do not experience pain in the same way as do higher animals, there is sufficient controversy that we will always err on the side of caution. Fish will be handled as gently as possible and anesthetizing prior to procedures that would be reasonably expected to cause significant pain in a higher animal.
- 3) Studies will be designed to minimize trauma to experimental animals to the greatest practical extent.
- 4) Fish in studies will be protected from disease by biosecurity guidelines administered by the Center Organism Importation Needs Committee. In the event that fish show signs of diseases, the Center Fish Disease Laboratory will be consulted and the fish provided with disease treatments most appropriate to the study and to their potential food animal status. All dead animals will be promptly removed from ponds, tanks or other fish holding containers.
- 5) Environmental conditions will be maintained to provide oxygen levels and water quality consistent with good fish health. In the event that water quality deteriorates below acceptable levels, every practical effort will be made to re-establish acceptable conditions. The nature of these efforts will be chosen based on the study design.
- 6) When fish are sampled, harvested, or handled, they will be kept submerged as much as possible and tranquilizers, salt, and prophylactic disease treatments used as appropriate to mitigate the effects of stress. Fish will be gradually acclimated to temperature changes.
- 7) Wild vertebrate animals (snakes, turtles, amphibians, mammals, birds) invading experimental ponds or other experimental facilities will be harassed into leaving the experimental site, returned to the wild, or (if allowed by state and federal law) killed by the most humane practical method.

8) When studies are completed, remaining live animals will be sold for aquaculture or food use, donated to state or federal agencies, or euthanized with a suitably labeled fish anesthetic and disposed of according to station policy.

9) When wild fish are sampled they will be handled gently, maintained in suitable containers with sufficient oxygen and water quality. If they are to be preserved, they will be euthanized with a suitably labeled fish anesthetic prior to preservation. If they are to be measured, tagged, or subjected to other procedures prior to live release, the fish will be tranquilized if such treatment decreases trauma experienced by the animals and their release to the wild does not conflict with drug use regulations. When wild fish are released, it will be into an appropriate habitat as close to their site of capture as practical.

10) Electrofishing procedures will be periodically reviewed and equipment updated if necessary to ensure the least harm to fish during sampling procedures. For more details see *Snyder, D. E. 2003. Electrofishing and its harmful effects on fish. Information and Technology Report USGS/BRD/ITR-2003-0002, U. S. Government Printing Office, Denver, CO.*

11) All research will be conducted with all of the permits, licenses, and animal welfare oversight required by state and federal law.

12) For more detailed guidance than that provided by this policy, the American Fisheries Society "Guidelines for the Use of Fishes in Research" (currently at [http://www.fisheries.org/html/Public\\_Affairs/Sound\\_Science/Guidelines2004.shtm](http://www.fisheries.org/html/Public_Affairs/Sound_Science/Guidelines2004.shtm)) will be followed. Those desiring additional information on fish welfare may consult this comprehensive review.

*Erickson, H. S. 2003. Information resources on fish welfare 1970-2003. Animal Welfare Information Center Resource Series N. 20, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, MD.*