

Office of Administrative Management: Policy Issuance

Office of Research Services, Division of Veterinary Resources

DVR Animal Adoption/Retirement Policy

Issuing Office/Branch: ORS, Division of Veterinary Resources

OAM Policy Number: P10001

Approved Date: 2/21/2019

Approved By: Acting Director, ORS

Last Reviewed:

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A. PURPOSE

Goals/Objectives

The National Institutes of Health, Office of Research Services, Division of Veterinary Resources (DVR) has developed the following policy for the adoption of DVR-owned research animals that have completed their assigned study. DVR supports the adoption of Institutes, Centers and Offices (ICO)-owned and DVR-owned animals housed in DVR facilities when processed in accordance with the Disposition of Animals Policy issued by the Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR) on June 5, 2014; however, it is the responsibility of the individual ICO to determine if there are any further policies and procedures for the disposition of ICO-owned animals.

When DVR-owned animals have completed a research study and have no persistent health or behavior concerns, they may be adopted by NIH employees or other persons approved by the ORS Director or designee. They may be otherwise transferred to a non-profit foster/retirement organization, with the approval of the ORS Director or designee.

Coverage/Scope

This policy provides guidance and procedures for the adoption of DVR-owned research animals that have completed their assigned study and meet designated health and behavioral metrics.

Eligibility

To be eligible for adoption/retirement, DVR-owned research animals and adopters/caregivers must meet the following standards:

1. Species eligibility will be determined by the ORS Director or designee based upon the prior research scope, legal considerations, biosecurity issues and suitability as pets. Eligible species include common pets such as but not limited to dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and, in certain circumstances, farm animal such as pigs and sheep.
2. The animal must be in good health and of acceptable behavior as determined by the Facility Veterinarian, DVR Veterinary Behaviorist, and Principal Investigator based on physical examination, research history, and animal behavior evaluation.
3. Animals must be placed as pets to a home or to an approved non-profit organization for fostering or retirement and subsequently, must not be sold, released into the wild, used for food, or used as working animals.
4. The animal is of no current monetary value to NIH or another federal entity; that the costs of continued care of the animal exceed the amount of a potential sale of the animal; or that the original cost of the animal was less than \$500.00.
5. The ORS Director, or designee has approved the adoption.
6. Potential adopters will be individually screened by the Facility Veterinarian and DVR Veterinary Behaviorist, or designees, for suitability to adopt the animal. This will include determining whether the potential adopter has:
 - a. knowledge of and ability to properly care for the animal; and
 - b. sufficient resources, including proper space, required for lifelong animal care.

B. DEFINITIONS

Adoption: As defined by this policy, the completion of research use and full transfer of ownership from the NIH Division of Veterinary Resources (DVR) to approved private individuals or organizations that provide a permanent home and all subsequent care.

Foster: As defined by this policy, the transfer of ownership to an established organization with experience in and available resources to facilitate the subsequent adoption of the retired research animal to a permanent home.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES

After a candidate has applied for the adoption of a DVR-owned research animal, and been approved as described above, the following items must be completed prior to the actual adoption:

Veterinary Examinations:

1. A complete physical examination must be performed by the Facility Veterinarian for all potential adoptions.
2. Diagnostic testing and/or appropriate vaccinations and surgical sterilization must be administered prior to adoption, as deemed necessary, by the Facility Veterinarian.
3. If an animal has been previously microchipped, that microchip will be re-registered to the new owner prior to the animal's transfer from NIH.

Records Review:

1. A comprehensive review of research and medical records is completed by the Principle Investigator and Facility Veterinarian respectively to confirm the animal meets the eligibility criteria.
2. For dog and cat adoptions, compliance with the USDA Animal Welfare Act Regulations in Section 2.35 paragraphs (b), (c), and (e), and Section 2.38 is required.

Transfer of Ownership:

1. The adopter of the animal must bring an appropriately-sized transport crate to transfer the adopted animal from the NIH to its new home or foster/retirement organization on the adoption day. The NIH does not provide transport crates for the adoption or transfer of animals.
2. At the time of transfer, documentation will be made in the animal's record indicating the disposition of the animal and will include all necessary approvals from the Facility Veterinarian, Principal Investigator, DVR Veterinary Behaviorist, and ORS Director or designee.
3. The Transfer of Animal Ownership Agreement (Appendix A) will be signed and distributed as follows: one copy will be provided to the adopter and one copy will be included in the animal's permanent record with the DVR.
4. Once the animal leaves the NIH campus, and is in the possession of its new owner, the NIH will no longer be responsible for veterinary or behavioral care of the adopted animal.

D. POLICY

This ORS DVR supports the adoption of DVR-owned research study animals, having completed their assigned research study and met all other criteria as detailed above. The ORS Director, or designee, is responsible for approving and deeming eligible animals for adoption to approved NIH employees, or other persons. Animals may be otherwise transferred to a non-profit foster/retirement organization also approved by the ORS Director or designee.

E. RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL

All records (email and non-email) pertaining to this policy must be retained and disposed per [NIH Records Management Schedule](#). Note, all email messages sent or received in the conduct of Government business are considered Federal records, as well as Government property, and are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

F. INTERNAL CONTROLS

Frequency of Review: Every three years.

Method of Review: The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) will review the records related to this policy to ensure that all steps are being followed and all approvals are documented.

This policy will remain in effect until otherwise revised or rescinded.

G. REFERENCES

[Transfer of Animal Ownership Agreement](#)

[06/05/2014 - Disposition of Animals Policy issued by the Deputy Director for Intramural Research \(DDIR\)](#)

[Property Management/Abandonment Regulations: 41 CFR Sec 106-36.305-330.](#)

ACLAM Position Statement on Adoption of Research Animals:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5710161/>