

**Maintenance of euthanasia
equipment
IACUC Guideline
Effective Date: August 2024**



Purpose: PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals requires IACUCs to use the recommendations of the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia, which states: "This method [decapitation] is acceptable with conditions if performed correctly, and it may be used in research settings when its use is required by the experimental design and approved by the IACUC. The equipment used to perform decapitation should be maintained in good working order and serviced on a regular basis to ensure sharpness of blades."

Scope:

These guidelines apply to all investigators who perform decapitation with or without a prior chemical method of euthanasia. See [IACUC Euthanasia Policy](#) for requirements involving use decapitation.

Responsibilities:

IACUC must review and approve methods of euthanasia submitted by the Principal Investigator.

Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that anyone performing decapitation is properly trained. The responsibility for ensuring sharpness of the guillotine/scissors rests with the PI.

Guidelines:

The IACUC requires that individuals using guillotines and scissors are well versed in the correct use and maintenance in order to assure proper function and humane euthanasia. Each individual must be approved for this method of euthanasia and must demonstrate proficiency. Contact trainerIACUC@ucsf.edu to schedule an observation.

The guillotine/scissor action should be smooth with no perceptible binding or resistance. The IACUC recommends the following technique to assess the sharpness of guillotine/scissors: guillotine/scissors is/are sharp enough if it will cut through either special testing paper for scissor sharpness or a wet piece of weighing paper without dragging it between the blades and sticking.

- Personnel using a guillotine/scissors should make sure that equipment and blades are free of rust, clean prior to use, and operate smoothly.
- Moving parts of the guillotine should be periodically lubricated (with silicone spray such as WD-40 or equivalent).
- The frequency of guillotine and scissors sharpening will depend on the animal species involved and volume of use, but blades should be sharpened or replaced at least once per year.
- Sharpening and maintenance records as well as sharpening SOPs need to be available for the IACUC semi-annual inspections or upon IACUC request.

References:

1. AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia. 2020.