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Purpose / Scope

This document outlines the requirements for the capture, storage, and distribution of images (including all forms of visual and audio records) associated with animal-based science activities at Western. It applies to images taken of animals, personnel, spaces, and science activities associated with animal research and teaching.

Rationale

This requirements document has been developed to mitigate potential risks to animals, personnel, spaces, confidential information, and institutional reputation associated with uncontrolled and unsanctioned distribution of images of animal research without appropriate context. These requirements establish standardized practices for the capture, storage, and distribution of animal-related images.

General

All leaders of departments responsible for undertaking and/or supporting animal-based science, as well as those tasked with handling images, are to adhere to the following requirements and all associated institutional policies and guidelines.

New images should be captured only when suitable existing images or alternatives are unavailable (e.g., computer simulations, images sourced from other reputable sites with appropriate citation).

Those wishing to capture, store and/or distribute images must provide the applicable institutional approver with:

- Purpose,
- Method(s),
- Location,
- Personnel involved,
- Timeframe,
- Intended audience, and
- Chain of custody.

Unauthorized handling or use of images is prohibited. Where suspected unauthorized image handling is identified, the Vice-President (Research) – vpr@uwo.ca, Director, Stakeholder Relations, Western Communications (or designate), and University Veterinarian must be notified.

Approval Requirements

All image capture activities require approval from the PI and/or facility supervisor. Additional approvals may be required depending on the intended use and audience.

Institutional Approvers

Academic Purposes – The Principal Investigator will act as the approver for images directly associated with their academic responsibilities, e.g., journal publication, academic presentation, student theses, etc.

Non-Academic Purposes – The University Veterinarian, or veterinary designate, will act as the approver for images used for non-academic purposes, e.g., institutional personnel responsible for animal welfare oversight/interventions, external/public distribution not directly associated with academic activities.

- See below for related details.

Consent and Approval for Personnel Images

The term “Personnel” as used in this document includes PIs, researchers, research staff, research assistants, veterinarians, and other animal care staff.

Personnel whose images will be collected, used, stored, or disclosed must provide informed written consent in accordance with FIPPA. Before disclosure, they must have the opportunity to review images containing their likeness. Personnel may withdraw consent or impose restrictions on future use of their image.

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Prior to Capture of Images for Institutional Distribution

Institutional personnel responsible for capturing images of animals and/or animal areas must be authorized by their direct supervisor (e.g., the PI, staff supervisor) and must comply with the requirements of this document and all other applicable laws, institutional policies and procedures. Authorization may be provided on an ongoing basis for personnel whose duties routinely require image capture, provided they receive training on this policy during onboarding and periodic reminders thereafter, at least every six months. For example:

- Educational or training purposes (e.g., research findings, journal publications, data analysis, and conference presentations).
- Direct animal care, institutional animal user training and oversight (e.g., documentation of animal health and welfare conditions).

Prior to Capture & Distribution of Images for Public & External Use

Images intended for public distribution must be approved in writing by the Director, Stakeholder Relations, Western Communications (or designate) and the University Veterinarian. Additional approvals may be required based on risk and context.

External requests for images of animals, spaces, or personnel require approval from the PI, operational leader, Director, Stakeholder Relations, Western Communications (or designate), and affected personnel where applicable. Additional approvals may be required based on risk and context.

Capture of Images

Devices used for image capture or storage must be secured (e.g., password protected, encrypted, and physically secured).

Before image capture, authorized individuals must:

- Notify the area supervisor associated in advance,
- Limit image capture to the specific information required,
- As applicable to their role, avoid capturing images of unrelated proprietary or confidential information (e.g., other animals, animal records, personnel, location, AUP information), and
- Follow all area-specific biosecurity and human safety practices (e.g., room order, personal protective equipment (PPE), related standard operating procedures (SOPs).

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Capturing Images of Animals

Images must be captured in a manner that minimizes impact on animals.

Where feasible, capture should occur in isolation from other animals (e.g., within a dedicated procedure room rather than the animal holding room) and limit environment disruption (e.g., lighting, sound, equipment).

Images must accurately reflect approved practices and Animal Use Protocol requirements re:

- Housing (e.g., pen/cage/tank) must reflect applicable SOPs, and AUP requirements.
- Procedures captured, including animal and equipment set-up, must reflect best practices as outlined within the applicable SOPs and the approved AUP (e.g., aseptic technique for recovery surgeries, use of anesthetic agent).
- Human safety practices must align with institutional requirements (e.g., PPE, hazard-specific guidance).

Capturing Images of Spaces & Equipment

Images of spaces and/or equipment must be limited to specific information approved for sharing (e.g., equipment set-up, monitor output).

Where feasible, an animal simulation or figurine should be used when demonstrating equipment.

Capturing Images of Personnel

Image capture must consider the least privacy-invasive approach possible.

All applicable institutional policies and guidelines governing the capture of personnel must be followed. (see References).

Storage

Images must be stored in accordance with institutional requirements (See References).

Access to shared storage locations must be restricted to authorized personnel (e.g. Teams, OneDrive, shared drives).

Distribution

via Email

Email distribution must be limited to intended recipients and must not be forwarded to non-approved individuals.

- Where feasible, email permissions should be set to restrict forwarding.

via Internet

Images must be shared only through reputable, institutionally recognized platforms (e.g., approved journals or websites).

via Social Media

Prior to each use or disclosure on social media via third party applications - i.e. Snapchat, Facebook, X, TikTok - images must be approved by the Director, Stakeholder Relations, Western Communications (or designate) and the University Veterinarian.

Images must not be altered by AI or otherwise.

Unauthorized redistribution is not permitted.

Any breach of approved distribution parameters must be reported to the Director, Stakeholder Relations, Western Communications (or designate), the VPR (or designate), the University Veterinarian, institutional Legal and operations manager, and the ACC Chair.

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References

London Health Sciences Centre

- Photography, Video, and Audio Recording
- Use of Personal Health Information for Research, Education and Quality Improvement

McGill University - University Animal Care Committee

- Policy on Sharing Images of Animals Involved in Research and Teaching
- Guidelines on the Use of Images of Animals in Research and Teaching

Brock University

- Photograph taking policy (SOP FAC103)
- Permission to Conduct Photography Session of Any Animal Used for Research or Teaching on Campus or Designated Site

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

- Policy on Photography, Filming and/or Recording of Animals at CAMH

Western

Cyber Security for IT Support Providers

- Data Classification Standard
- Data Handling Standard

Revision History

Version	Date *dd/mm/yyyy*	Description of Changes	Authors
00	09-11-2026	New VPR Requirements Document	LT, AB, EB, ET