Use of Ether for Anesthesia in Animal Research

Concerns and Background

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) “Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals” (2013) has determined that the use of ether for euthanasia of animals is not acceptable, and the OSU IACUC adheres to this position.

Primary concerns related to ether use are:

- Ether is flammable, its use creates potential for explosion, and represents a personal safety issue.
- Ether is highly soluble, induces anesthesia slowly, and may be accompanied by agitation.
- Ether is irritating in animals, especially to eyes and nose, and has been used to create a model for stress.

Together, ether represents both an animal welfare and human safety concern. Use of ether for anesthesia is not recommended.

It is the policy of OSU’s IACUC that:

- Ether is not acceptable for euthanasia, and not recommended for anesthesia.
- The investigator must provide compelling scientific justification for the use of ether for anesthesia in animals, and explain why alternative anesthetics cannot be used.
- Justifications based solely on cost, ease of use, or past history are not acceptable.