PEA Job Description

1. Position Identification

Position Number: #992894, 993803, 998524, 998778
Position Title: Animal Health Technician
Department: READ
Reports to: Animal Health Technician Coordinator
Number of Direct/Indirect Reports: Direct 0 Indirect 0
Classification Level: SG 7
Last Updated: February 2017

2. Position Summary

Within the Office of Research Services, Animal Care Services (ACS) supports students, researchers and society by providing excellence in care to all species of animals involved in research and teaching at the University of Victoria. We build on the strength and diversity of our staff and stakeholders to optimize our ability to support research and teaching with animals following ethical and standard-of-care principles.

Our commitments include public and internal accountability, employing our core strengths to benefit our internal and external communities, promoting environments for work and study that are safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy and that foster mutual respect and civility, and recognizing that people are our primary strength.

All researchers working with animals are required to receive approval through the Animal Care Committee. Working under the Canadian Council on Animal Care’s (CCAC) guidelines, ACS provides housing facilities and services for animals, including veterinary and diagnostic services as well as training and expertise in laboratory animal medicine. The team includes Animal Health Technicians (AHTs), Registered Laboratory Animal Technicians (RLATs), and Animal Care Assistants (ACAs) working together in the delivery of animal care services.

Reporting to the Animal Health Technician (AHT) Coordinator, the AHTs are responsible for knowledge of animal health and husbandry for aquatic, amphibian, reptilian and mammalian species and for applying that knowledge to facilitate research and to provide daily husbandry, health assessment, and medical treatment of research animals at the University of Victoria’s Animal Care Units. This position is responsible for maintaining animal colonies under the supervision of the AHT Coordinator and Veterinary Director, including aspects of breeding (pre-weaning, weaning, sexing and retiring) for assigned colonies. The AHT provides cross-departmental support to RLATs, performing husbandry duties as assigned for workload management.

This position is also responsible for maintaining animal housing and environment, including environmental checks, disinfection and sanitization of facility rooms, assisting with machine/supplies maintenance, ensuring and improving employee safety, performing daily animal rounds and changing and cleaning of housing units as well as the operation of heavy machinery. Awareness and understanding of infectious substances and pathogens is also required for this position.

The AHTs work collaboratively to clarify research needs and to provide service, assistance and training related to animal health and husbandry. The AHTs contribute to efficient operations by participating in the development, implementation and revision of standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to animal health and husbandry, and through effective collaboration and teamwork.

Recognizing the inherent sensitivities around research with animals, ACS team members are expected to uphold the highest standards as they relate to ethical research and confidentiality. As
a member of ACS staff, this position demonstrates a high standard of professionalism at all times as a reflection of our overall mission.

To effectively support operational requirements, these positions are required to work a modified schedule, to be able to adapt to changing priorities, and are tertiary call-out contacts in the event of urgent animal health and welfare. This requires willingness and ability to be flexible in working evenings/weekends.

These positions work in a lab environment where there is a hazard of Laboratory Animal Allergy. There are mandatory requirements in place to minimize/eliminate the hazard, such as enrolment in the UVic Allergy Awareness program (requiring baseline and annual pulmonary function tests); adherence to WorkSafeBC requirements (including the appropriate use of respirators and to be clean-shaven while wearing them).

As these are hands-on roles working with aquatic, amphibian, reptilian and mammalian animals, the AHTs are required to maintain no known allergies to rodents or rabbits, and the products used for normal housing of these species. The AHTs are required to work outdoors with aquatic, amphibian and reptile species. The department provides appropriate clothing for inclement weather.

A full knowledge of husbandry, health, medical care and skilled technical procedures for aquatic, amphibian, reptilian, and mammalian species is required. Animal health technicians are required to work collaboratively with researchers providing service, assistance and training for matters relating the animal husbandry, health, and technical procedures. This position contributes to efficient operations by developing, implementing and revising SOPs related to animal husbandry, health, and technical procedures. Technical skills required include handling, tissue sampling, surgical procedures, necropsies, IV IP, and SQ injections, gavage, anesthetics, medical treatments, euthanasia etc.

### 3. Key Responsibilities and Expectations

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| Assessment, diagnosis, treatment and euthanasia of research animals (45%) | • Assess animals with health abnormalities detected during regular husbandry rounds.  
• Follow published veterinary or research protocols, regulatory and departmental guidelines, and SOPs to:  
  o Carry out researcher or veterinary authorized medical/surgical procedures.  
  o Document assessments, treatments, procedures, outcomes and sample details.  
  o Communicate animal health status to responsible stakeholders including the Veterinarian, the AHT Coordinator, the Principal Investigator, researchers and colleagues.  
• Participate in the development, updating and implementation of departmental animal health sentinel, outbreak management, and biosecurity programs.  
• Responsible for the health monitoring program for existing colonies and new animal arrivals, recognizing disease symptoms, isolating infected animals, and after consultation with the AHT Coordinator and attending veterinarian, give prescribe treatments as recommended.  
• Assist in the ordering, shipping and receiving of commercially and non-commercially supplied animals with full knowledge of the pathogen exclusion list for the Animal Care Unit facilities.  
• Responsible for the use of controlled drugs and maintaining accurate records. |
| Daily monitoring of animals & performance of husbandry duties (45%) | • Perform daily monitoring and husbandry procedures to ensure that feed, water, supplies and environmental conditions are safe and appropriate for research animals.  
• Evaluate health and condition of animals by visual inspection.  
• Identify abnormalities in animal health and treat appropriately according to Animal Care Services policies and procedures.  
• Operate all husbandry-related equipment.  
• Monitor and identify abnormalities in environmental conditions or equipment, remediate when safe and appropriate. Refer to supervisor when immediate remediation not possible.  
• Clean and sanitize areas of the facility where animals are housed, and where feed and equipment is used and stored adhering to Occupational Health, Safety and Environment policies.  
• Document and report abnormalities in animal health, environmental conditions or equipment following SOPs.  
• Seek feedback from clients, supervisors and colleagues to evaluate personal job-related effectiveness and provide recommendations to supervisors for operational or service delivery improvements.  
• Actively build relationships across the department and with stakeholders and clients.  
• Follow mandatory requirements in place to minimize/eliminate disease hazards.  
• Perform cleaning of Biosafety level II soiled caging and supplies.  
• Autoclave contaminated wastes and equipment.  
• Dispose of animal remains, sharps containers and biological waste associated with animals safely in a biohazardous setting. |
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| Research services and training (5%) | • Assist in creating and participating in the Animal Care Units (ACU) training programs.  
• Provide instruction with a variety of research animals. Design, modify, and utilize training materials, electronic presentations, and other training aids.  
• Conduct ongoing continuing education for animal care staff, investigators and research staff pertinent to animal care and use.  
• Respond to service requests in a timely and professional manner, providing effective follow up communication to ensure clarity of request and response.  
• Assist researchers with the preparation of Animal Use Protocols for the Animal Care Committee (ACC).  
• Develop, modify and maintain training records and SOPs  
• Assess the training programs teaching methods, laboratory techniques, and research procedures on a continuous basis in order to recommend changes, implement improvements and increase effectiveness.  
• Represent ACS and/or UVic as a delegate at internal and external meetings, conferences and presentations. |
| Maintain Inventory and equipment associated with the AC facilities (5%) | • Perform regularly scheduled inventory of laboratory and surgical equipment and supplies and provide information to AHT Coordinator.  
• Perform regular inventory of facility equipment and supplies and provide results to the RLAT Coordinator.  
• Maintain inventory and order disposable laboratory and surgical |
- Observe and monitor environmental conditions (e.g. temperature, photoperiod, humidity) in the animal facilities through data logging systems. Identify any inappropriate parameters and report any abnormalities to RLAT Coordinator.

- Record inventory of animal colonies using a computer spreadsheet and generate reports for the Principal Investigators as requested by the AHT Coordinator.

- Participate in the development and revision of relevant SOPs in conjunction with the RLAT Coordinator and the AHT Coordinator.

### 4. Classification Factors:

#### Problem-Solving:

Problems are generally described in the scientific or trade literature. Internal and external expert resources including the AHT Coordinator and Veterinarian are readily available to provide guidance on more complex problems. Generally, industry and regulatory guidelines and procedures can be relied upon; however there are times when research projects require modified solutions or creative methods of using existing equipment.

The AHT is expected to be proficient with literature searches using scientific publication databases (e.g. PubMed), published textbooks and the internet, and will leverage industry and professional contacts and colleagues at other institutions to find information that may not readily or widely be available on animal health-related topics.

The AHT is expected to be able to troubleshoot minor failures in animal health - and husbandry-related equipment (e.g. temperature/humidity abnormalities, door alarms), and identify when a supervisor’s assistance is required.

This position works closely with researchers on developing new techniques, training and assisting with protocols.

#### Responsibility for Financial & Material resources:

Requires some responsibility for resources, typically restricted to the department.

The AHT may use petty cash ($100) to purchase small items for day-to-day needs. The AHT provides assessments of equipment/materials/instruments under consideration for future use by the department, using industry-related specifications. The AHT is responsible for the upkeep of the surgical, necropsy, quarantine and isolation areas and equipment, office areas, procedure rooms and wet lab areas, including the maintenance and security of records.

#### Responsibility for Human Resources:

Provides ongoing technical support and training to others through the new user training program. Expected to provide cross-departmental orientation to new staff members and new researchers. May provide input into proficiency of new staff and researchers. Training and orientation duties and procedures will follow well-established departmental procedures and policies, and rely upon Animal Care Committee – approved policies and procedures.

The AHT Coordinator directly supervises the AHT, and SOPs are available for most activities. The AHT is expected to work with minimal direct supervision on a day-to-day basis, and generally with minimal supervision on the weekends, on holidays, and after normal business hours.

There is no formal, direct supervision provided by this position.

The AHTs provide in-depth knowledge within an area of expertise and are expected to maintain and share their knowledge collaboratively, through working group meetings, events and other activities in support of animal care issues, including contributions to the University’s Animal Care
Committee and its subcommittees.

**Impact of Decisions and Actions:**

Individual actions and decisions could impact the objectives and/or results of specific research projects and departmental programs and services, and the success of the University of Victoria’s community or researchers using animal models. Recommendations or guidance regarding animal health or project work is provided by the AHT with the ultimate decision residing with the Veterinarian or Principal Investigator.

The AHT is responsible for carrying out established CCAC guidelines-based animal health and husbandry programs and documenting procedures and activities that are carried out under ACC-approved protocols. Failure to meet guidelines may have an impact in the University’s certification of Good Animal Practice with the CCAC, thus affecting the University’s eligibility for Tri-Council funding.

**Independence:**

The AHT is responsible for implementing practices and procedures as outlined by professional, industry and regulatory agency policies and procedures. In the context of the Animal Care Committee and approved Animal Use Protocols, the Principal Investigator and/or Veterinarian authorize or oversee all decisions associated with the delivery of animal health-related treatments or procedures. Knowledge and regular review of the scientific literature and electronically published material from the professional and regulatory bodies is expected. Within the framework of the ACC, the AHT contributes to changes in departmental policy and procedure that are usually approved by supervisors and the ACC.

Under the authority of the Veterinary Director, decision making with regard to emergency animal welfare. AHT must be able to assess the condition of the animal and determine if intervention is required.

Development and implementation of training and documentation programs to assist in the training of staff, researchers, students such as mouse/rat handling, euthanasia training, and technical procedures such as bile duct or jugular cannulation.

The AHT Coordinator assigns the day-to-day scheduling of departmental and cross-departmental tasks of the AHT, based on operational priorities. All but the most basic remediation of husbandry-related equipment is referred to the supervisor. Emergency decisions associated with critical animal welfare situations are carried out under the authorization of the Veterinarian or Principal Investigator.

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**5. Summary of qualifications:**

This position requires an undergraduate degree in a related field (e.g. Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology) plus a minimum 2 years’ of related experience:
- With aquatic, amphibian, reptile and mammalian species and their housing systems
- Working in a regulatory environment with standard operating procedures

An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered (including AHT diploma).

Knowledge requirements include:
- Animal Health Technologist diploma from a North American – accredited institution (or internationally – recognized equivalent).
- RLAT certification with the Canadian Association of Laboratory Animal Science (CALAS) within one year of hire. Maintaining certification status is mandatory.

In addition this position requires:
- Demonstrated strong organizational and client-focused service skills.
- Superior communication and time management skills.
- Proficiency with information/communication technologies (web searches/email/word processing/spreadsheets).
- Ability to work collaboratively on a team as well as individually.
- Discretion, discernment and confidentiality

Assets or Preferences:
- Preference may be given to applicants holding advanced relevant training/certification and/or experience working in a post-secondary or research environment.

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