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Exploring the *Ethical Framework for Obtaining Material from Sentient Animals*

22 January 2026

We will begin shortly

Registered charity no: 1147061

Expert Webinars

Today's session is part of our 2025-2026 *Expert Webinars* series.

These sessions offer an opportunity to gain **expert insights on key research integrity issues**, along with the latest developments and examples of best practice to support your work.

Future sessions this year:

- **24 March '26**: The role of supervisors in fostering a positive research culture
- **3 June '26**: Exploring *Whistleblowing and Breaches of Good Research Practice*

Agenda

Topic	Presenter
Welcome and housekeeping	**Lesley Alborough** *UKRIO*
About UKRIO	**Lesley Alborough** *UKRIO*
Presenting the guidance (*approx. 40 min.*)	**Dr Nikki Osborne** *Responsible Research* **Carol Smee** *Welcome Sanger Institute*
Q&A (*approx. 10 min.*)	-
Close	-

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Housekeeping

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About UKRIO

Registered charity no: 1147061

Our mission

UKRIO
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Through our activities, we aim to support the UK research community is supported to produce work of the highest integrity, quality and efficacy.

Champion high quality research

Champion the governance, management and conduct essential for high quality and ethical research

Lead and shape conversation

Lead and shape conversations about research integrity in the UK and beyond

Offer independent advice and guidance

Give confidential, independent and expert advice and guidance on all forms of research integrity challenges and opportunities as they arise

Cultivate and share best practice

Create and share knowledge of best practice and positive research cultures and conduct

How we do it

UKRIO
RESEARCH INTEGRITY OFFICE

Confidential Advisory Service

Confidential and independent advice to all individuals and organisations on research integrity matters

Information and Guidance

Ever-growing hub of information and guidance to support everyone involved in research, from senior leaders to early-career researchers

Training and Education

Training and consultancy, both in person and virtually, tailored to different contexts and audiences

Thought Leadership and Community-building

Convening partners across the research ecosystem to connect, share expertise, and help shape practical responses to emerging and pressing issues

Discover the full scope of our activities in our **2025/2026 Work Programme**

Today's speakers

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Dr Nikki Osborne

Founding Director
Responsible Research Practice &
Mindset Action

Carole Smee

Head of Research Governance for
Trusted Global Compliance
Wellcome Sanger Institute

Introducing the Ethical Framework for Obtaining Materials from Sentient Animals

Dr Nikki Osborne

UKRIO Expert Webinar – 22 January 2026

UK Research Integrity Office

UKRIO

Research Integrity: A primer on research involving animals

Version 2.0

Animal
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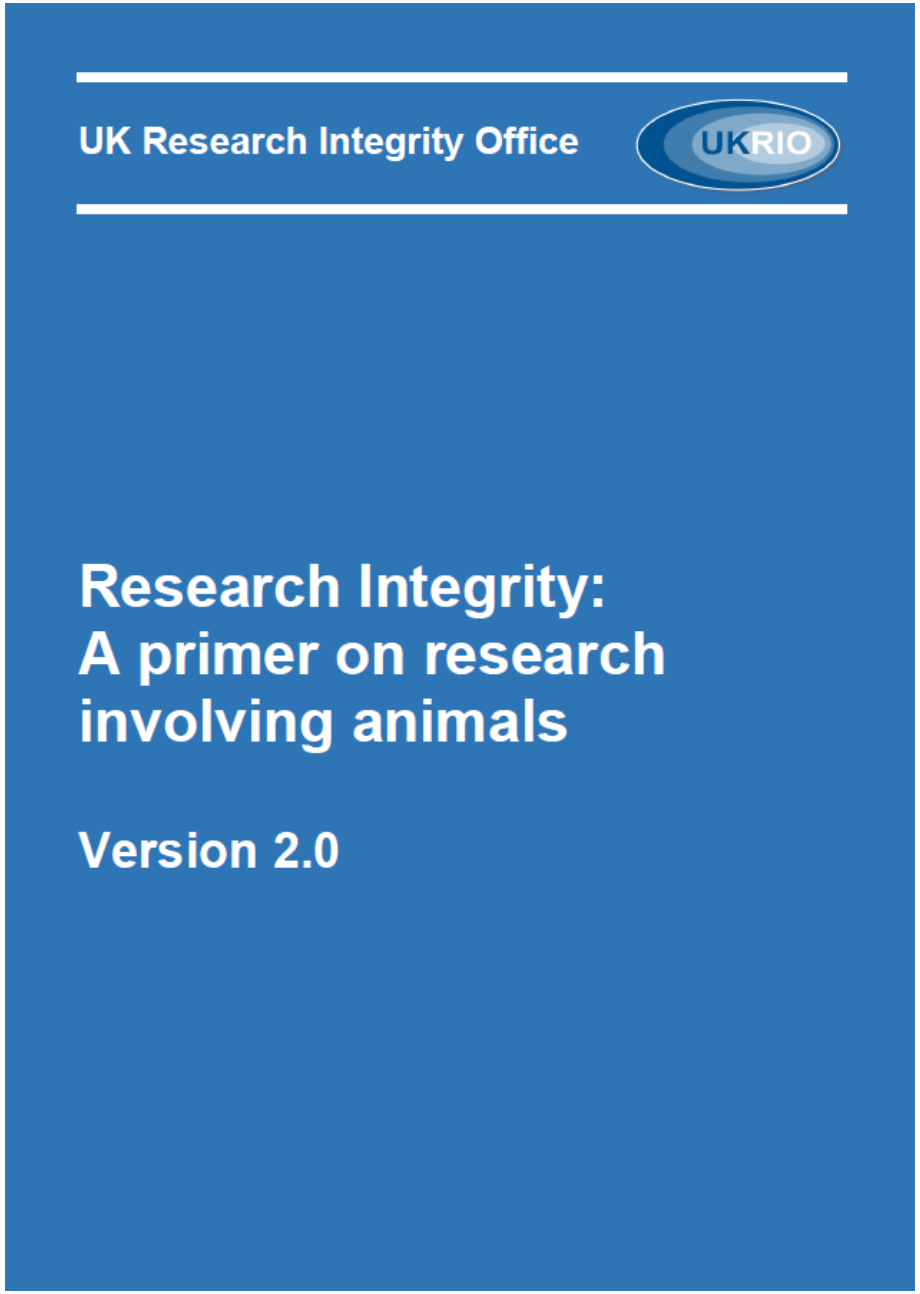
"The funding bodies are committed to introducing and implementing standards which reflect contemporary good practice, including when these exceed the minimum requirements of legislation and codes of practice, for all research using animals, ***not just that regulated under ASPA****."*



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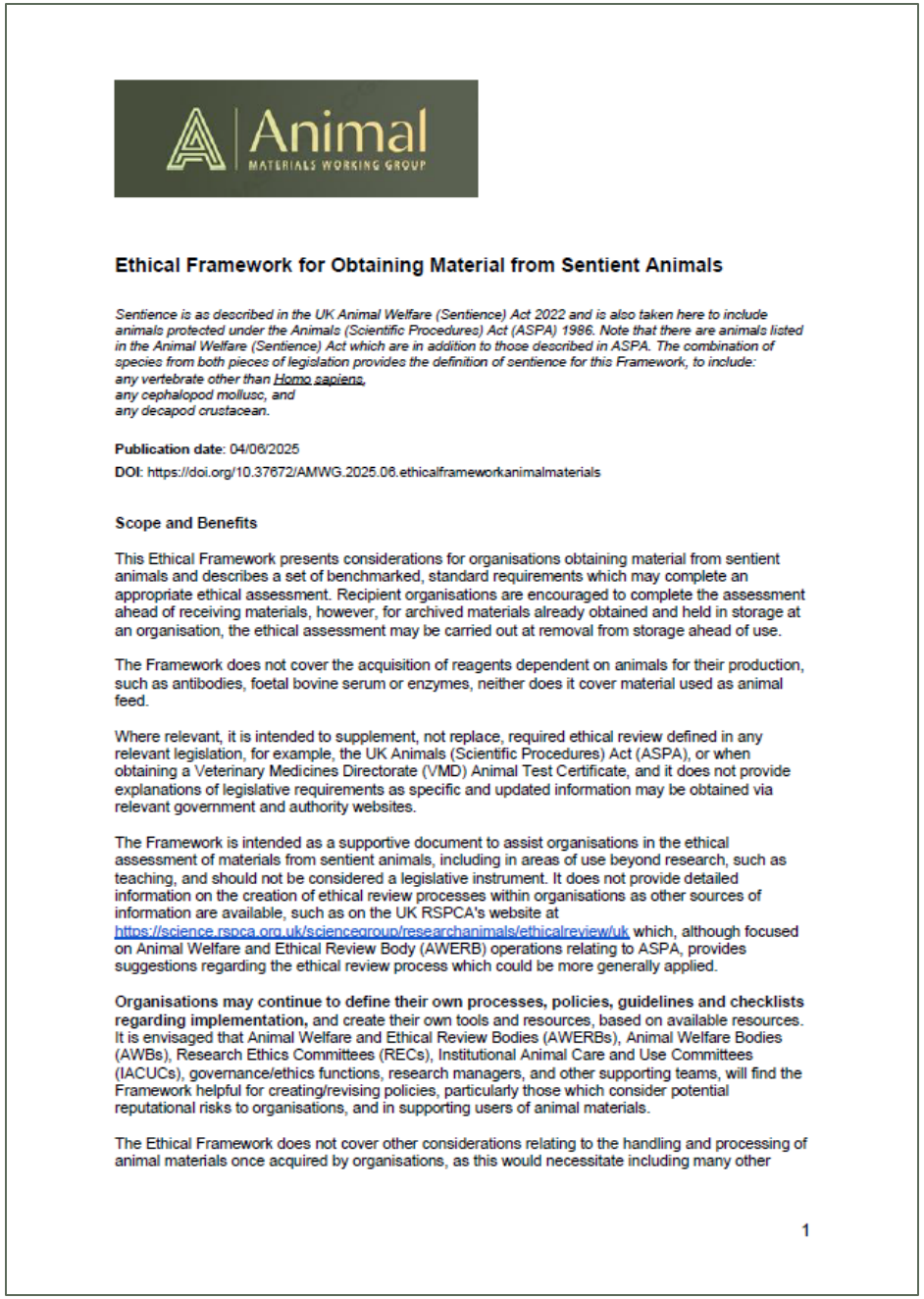
*"**This document is relevant to all research involving** the use of live animals, **biological materials derived from animals**, or animal derived data. This is because the scientific, ethical and welfare concerns that have underpinned the development of good practice guidelines and standards in this area apply irrespective of legislative requirements."*



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Ethical Framework for Obtaining Material from Sentient Animals

Sentience is as described in the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 and is also taken here to include animals protected under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986. Note that there are animals listed in the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act which are in addition to those described in ASPA. The combination of species from both pieces of legislation provides the definition of sentience for this Framework, to include:
any vertebrate other than Homo sapiens,
any cephalopod mollusc, and
any decapod crustacean.

Publication date: 04/06/2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37672/AMWG.2025.06.ethicalframeworkanimalmaterials

Scope and Benefits

This Ethical Framework presents considerations for organisations obtaining material from sentient animals and describes a set of benchmarked, standard requirements which may complete an appropriate ethical assessment. Recipient organisations are encouraged to complete the assessment ahead of receiving materials, however, for archived materials already obtained and held in storage at an organisation, the ethical assessment may be carried out at removal from storage ahead of use.

The Framework does not cover the acquisition of reagents dependent on animals for their production, such as antibodies, foetal bovine serum or enzymes, neither does it cover material used as animal feed.

Where relevant, it is intended to supplement, not replace, required ethical review defined in any relevant legislation, for example, the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA), or when obtaining a Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) Animal Test Certificate, and it does not provide explanations of legislative requirements as specific and updated information may be obtained via relevant government and authority websites.

The Framework is intended as a supportive document to assist organisations in the ethical assessment of materials from sentient animals, including in areas of use beyond research, such as teaching, and should not be considered a legislative instrument. It does not provide detailed information on the creation of ethical review processes within organisations as other sources of information are available, such as on the UK RSPCA's website at https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/researchanimals/ethicalreview/uk which, although focused on Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) operations relating to ASPA, provides suggestions regarding the ethical review process which could be more generally applied.

Organisations may continue to define their own processes, policies, guidelines and checklists regarding implementation, and create their own tools and resources, based on available resources. It is envisaged that Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs), Animal Welfare Bodies (AWBs), Research Ethics Committees (RECs), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs), governance/ethics functions, research managers, and other supporting teams, will find the Framework helpful for creating/revising policies, particularly those which consider potential reputational risks to organisations, and in supporting users of animal materials.

The Ethical Framework does not cover other considerations relating to the handling and processing of animal materials once acquired by organisations, as this would necessitate including many other

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Section 1: animal material from sentient species kept or bred for research and/or educational purposes, or obtained as a result of a regulated procedure being applied to a sentient animals

Section 2: materials from sentient animals obtained through other activities e.g, from the food chain, veterinary clinics, farms, abattoirs, zoos, the wild etc

Ethical Framework for Obtaining Material from Sentient Animals User Guide

Publication date: 04/06/2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37672/AMWG.2025.06.ethicalframeworkanimalmaterialsuserguide

Contents

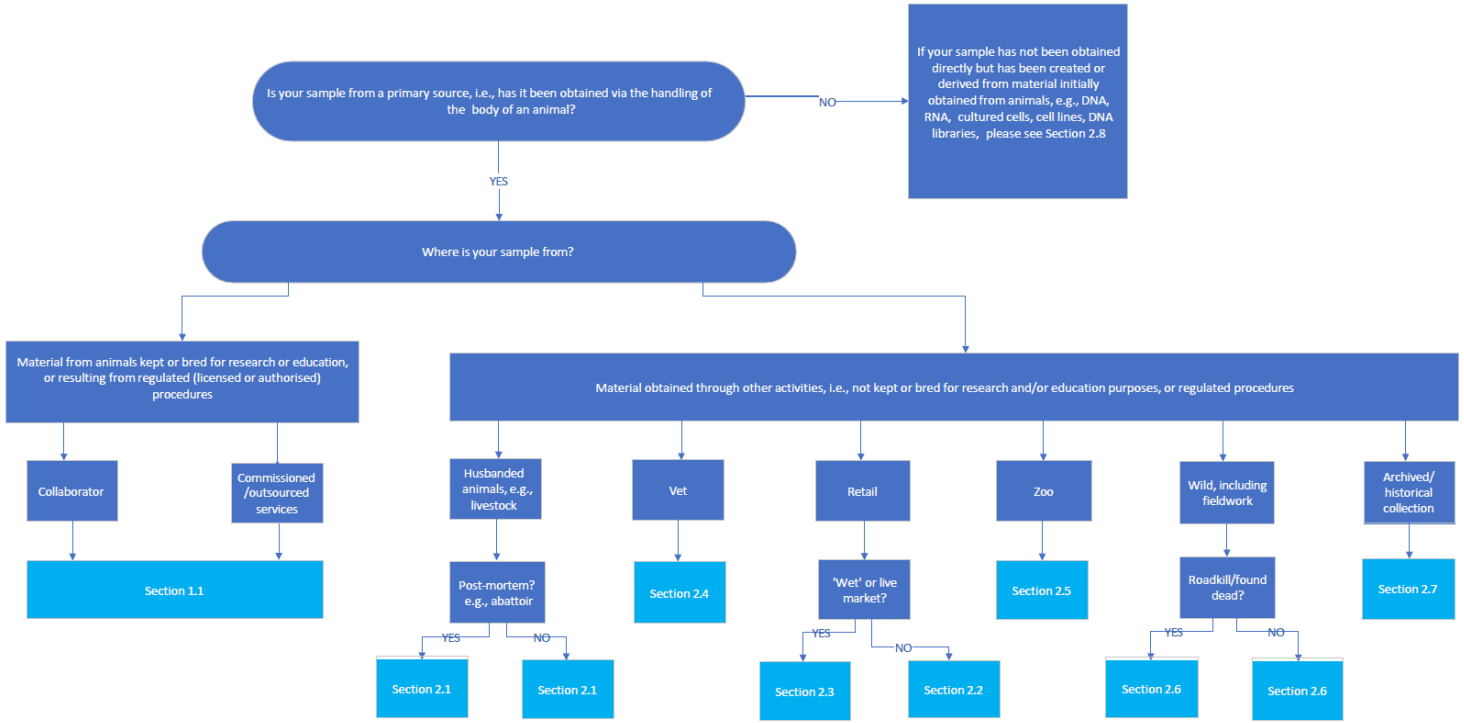
Introduction

The Ethical Framework for Obtaining Material from Sentient Animals has been created to enable organisations to generate their own benchmarked and standardised approaches to ethical assessment ahead of the acquisition of materials from sentient animals. It is intended to supplement, not replace, required ethical review defined in any relevant legislation, for example, the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA), or when obtaining a Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) Animal Test Certificate. It is hoped that Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs), Animal Welfare Bodies (AWBs), Research Ethics Committees (RECs), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs), governance/ethics functions, research managers, and other supporting teams, will find the Framework helpful for creating/revising policies and processes which support users of animal materials at their organisations.

Except where specified, the ethical assessment process described in each section is in reference to the acquisition of **material obtained from handling animals' bodies**, whether that is by personnel from the recipient organisation or via a third party.

Sentience in these documents is as described in the UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 and is also taken here to include animals protected under the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA). The combination of species from both pieces of legislation provides the definition of sentience for this Framework, to include:
any vertebrate other than *Homo sapiens*,
any cephalopod mollusc, and
any decapod crustacean.

The Framework is intended to provide guidance to any organisation which may acquire this material, including research and educational establishments, as well as commercial organisations. It is intended as a practical tool around which organisations can frame their own policies, processes and checklists, freely building on the Framework to add additional requirements suited to the individual



Why use the ethical framework ?

- Developed using the collective expertise of the Animal Materials Working Group members

Who we are:

Conveners and Contributors
Carol Smee, Catherine McCarthy, Sarah Collison (Wellcome Sanger Institute)

Contributors
Andy Cunningham (University of Sussex),
Nia Dimond (previously Wellcome Sanger Institute),
Sarah Long (Natural History Museum, London),
Nikki Osborne (Responsible Research),
Jenny Parks (University of Southampton),
Ros Rouse (University of the West of England),
Josephine Woodhams (UK Research Integrity Office)

Why use the ethical framework ?

- Developed using the collective expertise of the Animal Materials Working Group members

Who we are:

Observers
Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC),
Medical Research Council (MRC)

Stakeholder reviewers included representatives from:
University of Oxford, University of Warwick, University of Birmingham, University of Dundee, University of Exeter, University of Edinburgh, University of Liverpool, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde, University of Surrey, Queen's University Belfast, AstraZeneca, RSPCA, Royal Veterinary College, MRC Laboratory of Medical Sciences, NC3Rs, and more.

Why use the ethical framework ?

- Designed to fill a void that poses different challenges for different organisations

Why use the ethical framework ?

- Designed to fill a void that poses different challenges for different organisations

Why use the ethical framework ?

- Provides anyone involved in the ethical assessment/governance of, or due diligence relating to, animal materials, clear and practical guidance that they can use to shape in-house policies and procedures.

This includes:

- Researchers and laboratory staff
- Research ethics and governance teams
- Research administrators and managers
- AWERBs, AWBs, IACUCs and research ethics committees (RECs)
- Creative practitioners

Using the Ethical Framework at the Wellcome Sanger Institute

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Ethical Assessment of Materials from Sentient Animals at Sanger

Carried out by the Research Governance team (not committee)

- Cellular materials from sentient animals' bodies (e.g., no ethical assessment for cell lines, extracted DNA or RNA)
- Definition of 'sentience':

UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 -

any vertebrate other than humans,
any cephalopod mollusc (octopus, squid, cuttlefish, nautilus),
any decapod crustacean (crabs, lobsters, crayfish, shrimp, prawns).

UK Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986






Images: Unsplash

Why do we do this?

- Reputational risk to researchers and Institute

  Poor reputation could impact:

  Funding

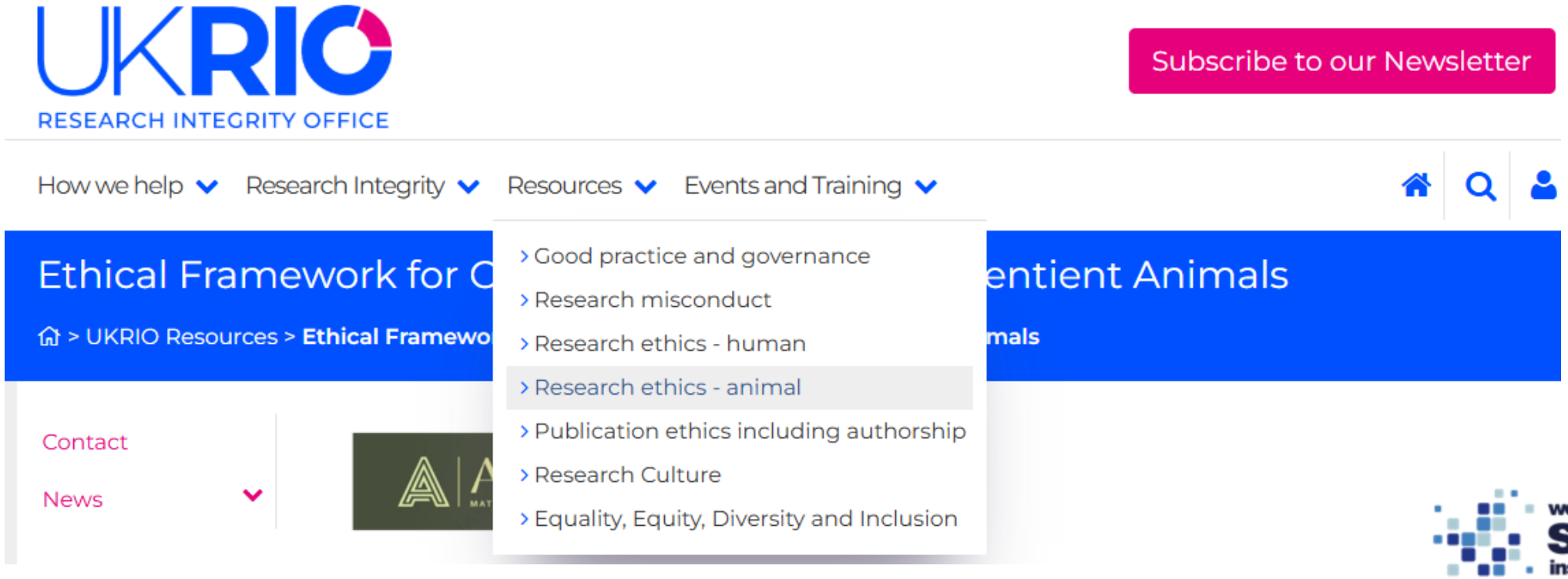
  Collaborations

  Researchers' careers

- Drive-up animal welfare standards

Ethical Framework:

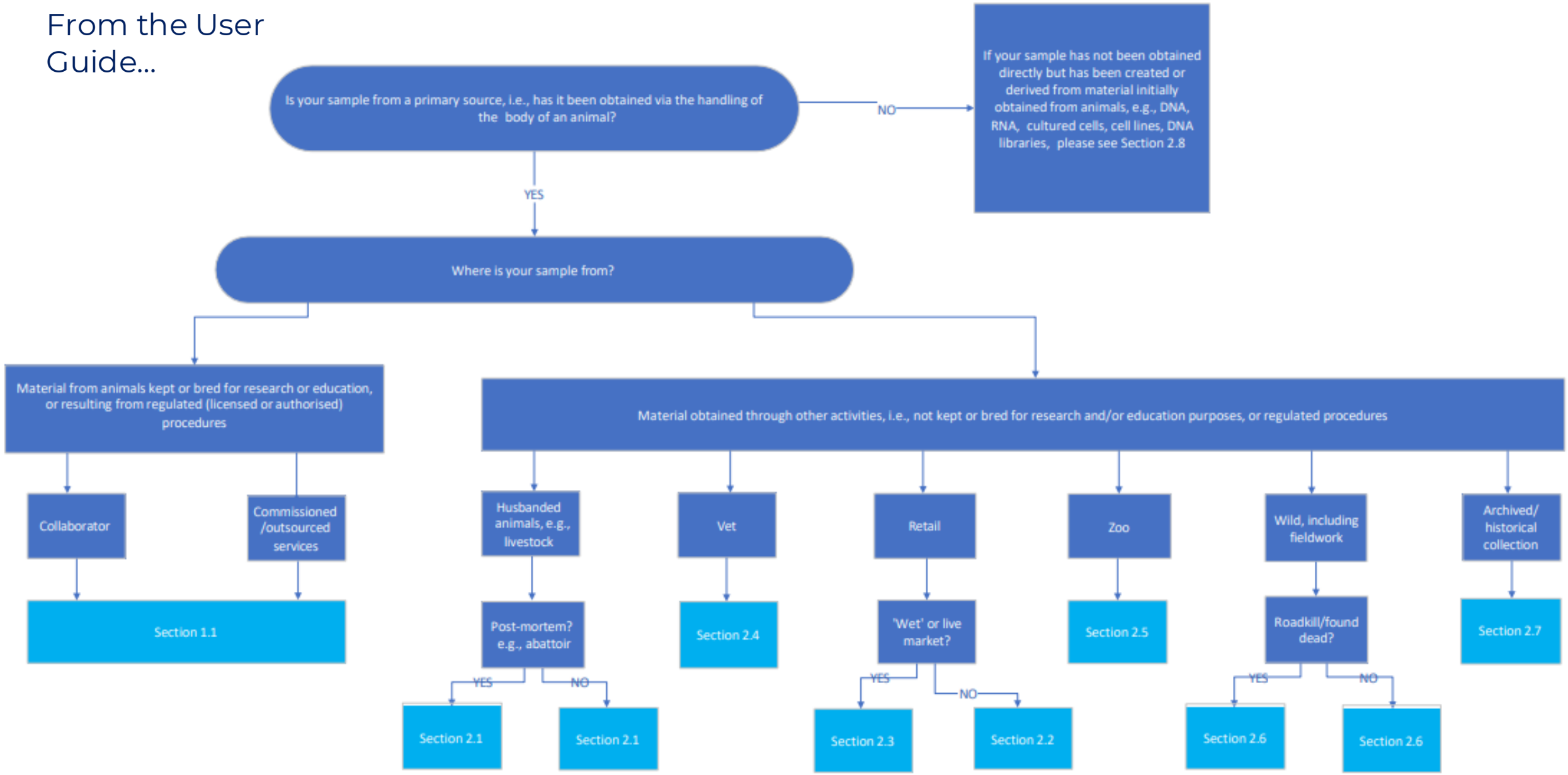
ukrio.org/ukrio-resources/ethical-framework-for-obtaining-materials-from-sentient-animals/



- Laboratories (inc. commissioned/outsourced services)
- Husbanded animals (inc. farms, aquaculture, livestock, abattoirs)
- Veterinary clinics/surgeries
- Food retail outlets (inc. supermarkets)
- Zoos (inc. wildlife parks, animal shelters, aquaria, private collections)
- From the wild (inc. fieldwork, roadkill, found dead)
- Generally at first use, but Section 2.7 covers archives/historical collections (further use)
- [Section 2.8: Secondary materials, e.g., cell lines, extracted DNA, RNA – 'no further ethical assessment required']

What sources of material does the Framework cover?

From the User Guide...



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- Reagents (including antibodies, FBS, enzymes)
- Material used as animal feed
- Secondary data (but organisations are free to ethically assess the data source using the Framework)

What sources of material are not covered?

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What does the Framework not do?

- Does not replace required ethical review defined in any legislation
- Does not cover all legal requirements nor provide explanations of legislation (as detailed information is provided by relevant authorities)
- Does not suggest a separate, additional process or extra committee
- Does not define any organisation's processes/policies, or suggest creation of new processes/policies
- Does not cover other processes beyond direct ethical assessment, such as H&S, sample management, biosecurity, disposal, transport

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How to use the Framework

- **Requirements** are listed — Requirement
- **Enhanced considerations** provide suggestions if organisations wish to extend their policies in the future — Enhanced considerations
- **Approaches when the requirements cannot be met** are provided in some sections (e.g., full ethics committee review for justification of exceptions) — Approach if requirements cannot be met
- **Additional requirements** listed within **Requirements** section - all information within the previous sections must ALSO be read, as some requirements will apply generally (e.g., if post mortem materials are to be used, the sections on live-sampling must also be read, as some requirements may equally apply)

Section 2.8

2.8 Use of secondary materials (materials which have not been obtained from handling animals' bodies, but have been created or derived subsequently from cellular material initially obtained from animals), e.g., DNA, RNA, cultured *(in vitro)* cells, cell lines, DNA libraries.	
Requirements	**For all materials** • Organisations must check that use would be in accordance with relevant existing contractual obligations and import authorisations. • No further ethical assessment is required.
Enhanced considerations	**For all materials** • Organisations should check the provenance of the materials, where possible, and any publicly-available information relating to animal welfare standards at the source organisation from where cellular materials from animals' bodies were originally obtained and carry out an ethical assessment ahead of using the material. Recipient organisations may determine that use is permitted following this assessment. • If the provenance of secondary materials cannot be determined and/or it is not known if use would be in accordance with contractual obligations and import authorisations, then an alternative source of materials should be considered, if appropriate. Organisations may decide to use secondary materials where the provenance is unknown following an ethical assessment to include potential legal and reputational risks. • Organisations should consider adding materials to the Research Resource Identification Portal (https://rrid.site/) to assign a reference number to materials which may be shared and enable traceability of physical resources through publications, if appropriate.

Sanger Case-Study 1

Post mortem samples from animals in a UK zoo

Case-Study 1: Post mortem samples from animals in a UK zoo

Ethical Assessment against Framework:

- Sampling under ASPA/lab animals? No – not regulated under ASPA.
- Consent from owner of animals? Sampling is lawful? Email assurance of consent obtained from zoo (owner) and that sampling was lawful.
- Relevant permits/licences? No import required (from UK source). CITES permit not required in this case. ABS requirements assessed.
- Registration? Zoo is a member of an appropriate association (BIAZA).
- Review of publicly available information, Codes of Practice, policies on standards of animal welfare and husbandry. Checks made on animal welfare and how animals housed (against available information on best practice for the species). BIAZA policies reviewed.
- Reason for humane killing or death? Adherence with CoP, e.g., BIAZA? Email from zoo received indicating animal was humanely euthanised due to painful health concerns which could not be alleviated and confirming adherence to BIAZA Euthanasia Policy.
- Animals were not killed solely or primarily for recipient organisation (unless robustly justified in terms of the work, e.g., disease outbreak, and full ethics committee favourable opinion)? No - animal was euthanised for another reason.
- Method of killing was humane and appropriate for species? Competently achieved? Method of killing determined to be humane for species (anaesthetic overdose). Confirmation received that staff member trained and competent in the euthanasia technique.
- *Outcome: Assessment and appropriate due diligence completed. Passed.*

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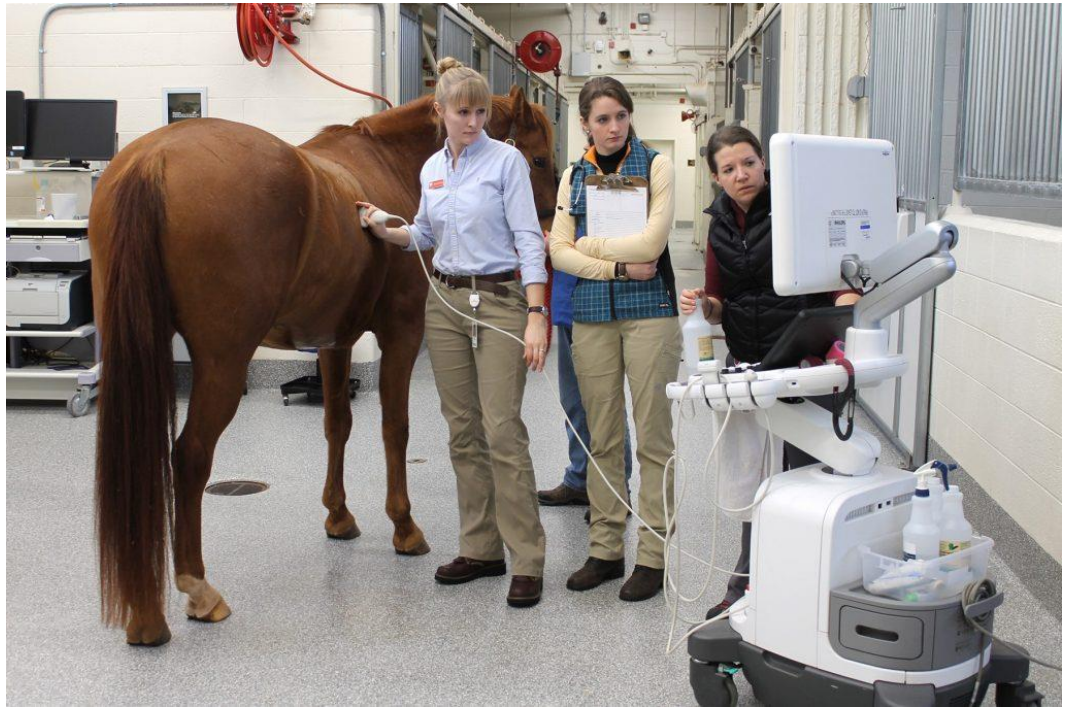
Case-Study 2: Materials from live animals from veterinaryclinics/practices around the world



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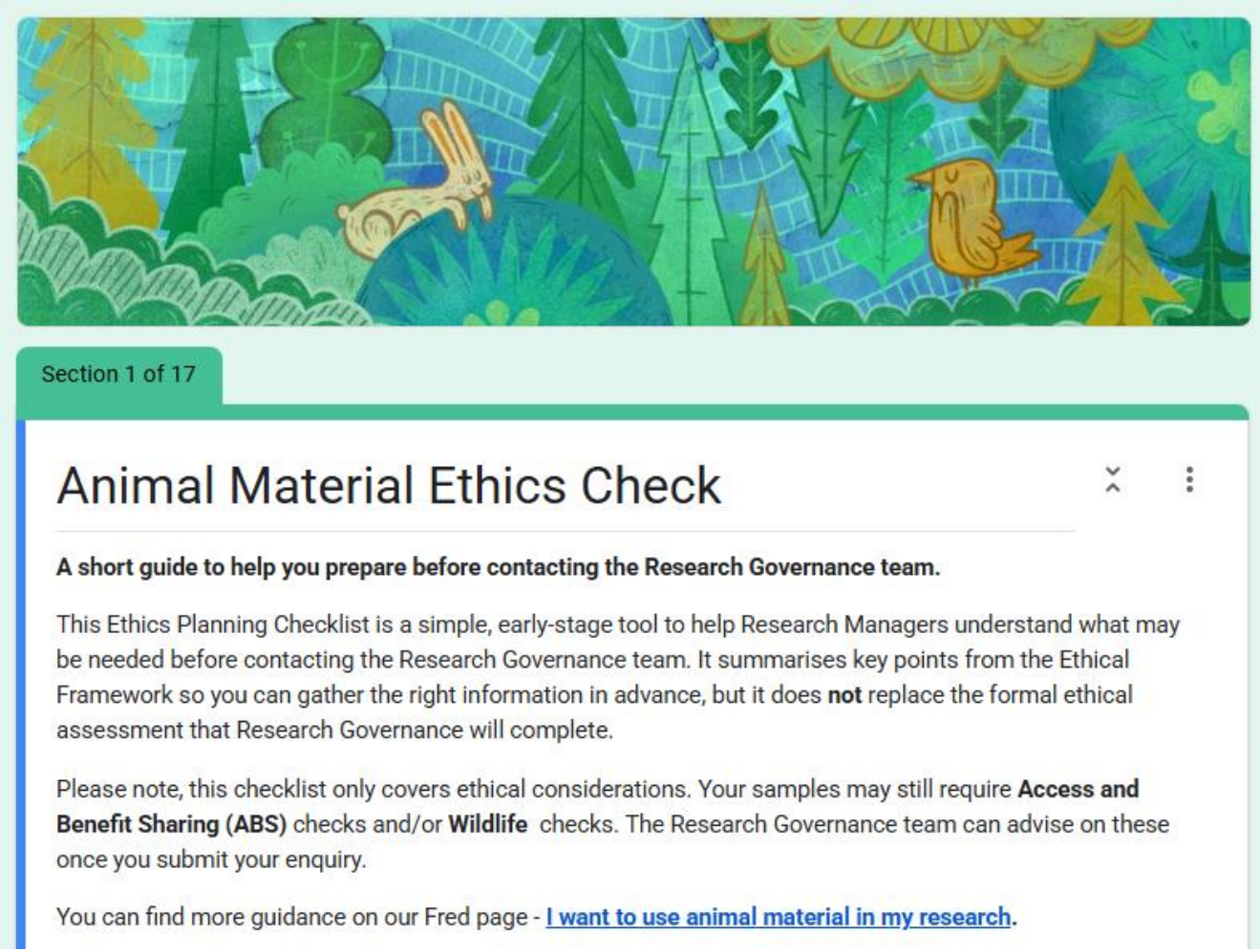
Case-Study 2: Materials from live animals from veterinaryclinics/practices around the world

Ethical Assessment against Framework:

- Sampling under ASPA/lab animals? No – sampling primarily for diagnosis, disease surveillance or treatment.
- Assurance from fully qualified vet or registered vet practice that method of sampling in accordance with routine veterinary practice, humane in specific situation and carried out by a competent person? Yes, obtained (email from each vet practice).
- Owned/feral/stray/wild animals? Owned and stray animals.
- Owned animals – consent from owner or legal exemption to use (re-use) samples in research? Yes, obtained (email confirmation from each vet practice).
- Stray animals – Justification why cannot use from only owned animals, benefit to animal population or species, other species or environment? Justification recorded as to necessity to use stray animals (research into species-specific disease prevalent in stray populations and transferred via stray population behaviour). Samples obtained during stray animal health checks, disease surveillance and treatment.
- Non-UK owned animals – Justification for use. Large number of samples required for different disease-type prevalence assessment and mapping of distribution and genetic variation.
- *Outcome: Assessment and appropriate due diligence completed. Passed.*

Electronic toolkit

Uses the Framework to create questions in a Google form



Is the material from a sentient animal?

According to the:
UK Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986

A sentient animal includes:

All vertebrates (except humans):

- Mammals (e.g., mice, pigs, primates)
- Birds (e.g., chickens, pigeons)
- Reptiles (e.g., lizards, snakes)
- Amphibians (e.g., frogs, salamanders)
- Fish (e.g., zebrafish, trout)

All cephalopod molluscs:

- Octopus
- Squid
- Cuttlefish

Cephalopods were included after research showed they can feel pain, show learning, and problem-solving behaviour.

All decapod crustaceans:

- Crabs
- Lobsters
- Shrimps

Decapods were officially recognised as sentient in 2022, due to evidence they experience pain-like states, especially under stress.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Section 3 of 17

Material Description

Description (optional)

Material Type

- ○ Primary (e.g., tissue, organs)
- ○ Secondary (e.g., DNA, RNA, cell lines)
- ○ Archived
- ○ Not sure

Section 4 of 17

Material Source

Description (optional)

What is the source of the material?

- ( ) Collaborative or commissioned laboratory work using animals
- ( ) Abattoir, farm, fishery
- ( ) Retail food outlet
- ( ) Wet/live market
- ( ) Vet clinic/lab
- ( ) Zoo/aquarium/sanctuary
- ( ) Wild/fieldwork
- ( ) Archived
- ( ) Other: .....

Section 10 of 17

Zoo, Aquarium, Sanctuary, Wildlife Park

This section applies when animal material is sourced from a **zoo, aquarium, sanctuary, or wildlife park**. This may include animals that died naturally, were euthanised for health or management reasons, or samples were collected during veterinary care.

✓ The facility should be registered with an appropriate membership association (e.g., BIAZA or WAZA membership)

✓ You must check:

- The animal wasn't killed just for your research (as this will require robust justification and full ethics committee review before approval)

✓ Ask for written proof of:

- How the animal was housed and treated
- How and why it was euthanised, if applicable, and adherence to any relevant policy, e.g., BIAZA Euthanasia Policy
- How samples were taken from living animals (and why would be helpful)
- The method of sampling and that it was appropriate for the species and not painful or harmful
- Consent from the zoo (animal owner)
- The sampling being lawful
- The person taking the sample was trained, competent and permitted to do so
- Legal permits and approvals

Check the procedure is not regulated by the **Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986** (as these sources are covered in *Collaborative or Commissioned Laboratory Work using Animals*). The Research Governance team can advise if you are unsure.

Can you confirm that these requirements have been met?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Section 9 of 17

Vet Clinic or Diagnostic Lab

This section applies if the animal material comes from a **veterinary clinic**, **veterinary diagnostic lab**, or **animal hospital** — for example, blood, tissues, or swabs collected during treatment or diagnostic procedures.

✓ The sample must come from a procedure done primarily for medical treatment or diagnosis. (If sampling is only for research purposes, this may mean the procedure should be carried out under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986 in the UK, and it may be similarly regulated overseas).
✓ You must have owner consent for use of the sample(s) in research, or have written assurance that owner consent was obtained or that there is a legal exemption
✓ Confirm it's legal to re-use the sample for research
✓ If material is from owned animals in an overseas clinic/animal hospital, explain why UK material wasn't used and whether owner consent has been obtained or is needed for use of the sample in research
✓ If the sample is from a stray, feral, or wild animal that was treated as a patient, please confirm why equivalent samples could not be obtained from owned animals, and describe how the work will benefit the relevant species or animal population.

Check the procedure is not regulated by the **Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986** (as these sources are covered in *Collaborative or Commissioned Laboratory Work using Animals*). The Research Governance team can advise if you are unsure.

Can you confirm that these requirements have been met?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

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Q&A Session

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Next steps

Engaging with our work

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End of session

Thank you for joining!