# Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee
# Guidelines for Exemption from AEEC Approval

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| Objective | To provide guidance on clarifying animal activities that are exempt from AEEC approval. |
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**Introduction**

In accordance with the The Hong Kong Code of Practice for Care and Use of Animals for Experimental Purposes and Cap 340 Animals (Control of Experiments) Ordinance, all research, teaching and testing protocols utilizing living vertebrate animals at The Chinese University of Hong Kong must be reviewed and approved by the AEEC before activities commence.

Researchers shall make an enquiry to the AEEC Secretariat (aeec@cuhk.edu.hk) if they believe their work can be waived from AEEC standard review process. Researchers shall provide a brief description of the proposed study, detailed explanation of how the protocol qualifies for exemption. The following guidelines outline the specific activities that may qualify for exemption.

**The animal use involved in this project falls entirely in one or more of the following categories:**

1. **No Living Animals Involved**

The use of deceased animals or animal parts does not require AEEC approval, unless the activity involves (1) killing animals solely for the purpose of obtaining or using their tissues or other materials, or (2) project-specific procedures of animals prior to killing them. The researcher should provide information on the source of these animals.

2. **Animal Research Activities Conducted Outside University facilities and Under Appropriate Oversight Bodies**

Animal research activities conducted outside university facilities in collaboration with an external organization will be overseen by the corresponding Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) at the external organization. The Principal Investigator (PI) must obtain animal ethics approval from the external AEC and provide proof for AEEC records.

3. **Zebrafish and Xenopus Eggs or Larvae under 3 days post-fertilization**

Larval stage of fish and amphibians have vertebrates and are covered by the Cap. 340 under experimental animals. Regulations will be applied to off-spring of egg-laying vertebrates after hatching. The hatching process begins 2-3 days post fertilization (dpf) and animals start to feed approximately at 4 dpf. Regarding the larval stage experiment, the regulation covers the process/protocol of an adult female laying eggs, which requires an AEEC approval.

4. **Non-intrusive field research**

Field research involving only observation, without manipulating animals in their living environment, can be exempted. However, please note that some fieldwork may still require permits or licenses from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department under Cap 208A Country Park Ordinance.

**Relevant Information**

**Use of Cephalopods**

Cephalopods, such as the octopus, cuttlefish, and squid, are a class of complex aquatic invertebrates frequently used in neuroscience research. Even though Hong Kong currently has no regulations requiring oversight of invertebrate species in research, teaching, and testing, the AEEC is committed to align with international ethical standards. Therefore, the PI should submit an AEEC application for the use of cephalopods, detailing the study rationale and adherence to the 3Rs principles (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement).

## References

Bartlett, D.H. and Silk, S.B. (2016). Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare Comments. *Zebrafish*, 13(6), Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from https://olaw.nih.gov/sites/default/files/zeb_2016_1344.pdf