

Addendum #1 to 2007 Guidelines of the American Society of Mammalogists on the use of wild mammals in research—approved June 2008

Euthanasia of Small Mammals in the Field

Although euthanasia of small mammals in field settings can be accomplished using any of the techniques approved by the AVMA, field settings pose additional challenges because use of injectable controlled substances or inhalants can present additional risks to investigators and stress to the animals. Thoracic compression offers an acceptable alternative under these conditions. Thoracic compression is an approved method of euthanasia for small birds by the AVMA and has been used effectively for decades by practicing mammalogists. The AVMA lists advantages of thoracic compression as speed of euthanasia, apparent painlessness, and maximizing use of the carcass. Cervical dislocation and other mechanical techniques are of limited utility in many of these same instances due to logistical considerations and because they distort important body measurements, destroy needed tissues and skeletal elements, and alter hormonal profiles through contamination by blood. Thoracic compression is an acceptable form of euthanasia when the investigator is skilled in the procedure and the individual mammals to be handled are sufficiently small that the thoracic cavity can be collapsed to prevent inspiration.