

Science Fair Ethics Guidelines for Animals Use

Please consider the ethics of your science fair project *before* you begin to work on it. If you have any questions regarding the ethics of your work and its eligibility, please contact your regional science fair committee or the BC Science Fair Alumni Mentorship Program at alumni@sciencefairs.ca. This is a quick guide to the ethics policies of Youth Science Foundation (YSF) Canada and display guidelines for most regional fairs.

Human subjects

Low-risk projects are permitted with adult supervision. These are restricted to surveys of attitudes and beliefs, skill tests, or observations of behaviour with the participants' consent.

Drugs (including most compounds intended to modify organic function) and invasive procedures may be used only under supervision of research personnel at a hospital, university, or medical laboratory with approval from an institutional review board.

All human subjects must give documented informed consent.

For definitions of the above and for more detail, please refer to YSF Policy [4.1.1](#)

Non-human animals

Bacteria, fungi, protozoa, insects, plants and invertebrate animals (except cephalopods) can be used to study basic biological processes. **All projects** must have scientific and educational merit and avoid gratuitous harm.

Vertebrate animals and cephalopods may not be used except for:

- Observation in their usual habitats without disturbance and without threat to their health or comfort.
- Behavioural projects involving positive rewards, as long as the animal is not under stress at any time.
- Projects supervised by research personnel with approval from an institutional review board.

For more detail, please refer to YSF Policy [4.1.2](#)

Project display guidelines for biological materials

Permitted

- Items naturally shed by an animal or parts properly prepared and preserved (eg: safely contained quills, shed snake skin, feathers, tanned pelts and hides, antlers, hair samples, skeletons or skeletal parts)
- Photographs of animals, cultures, or other biological material

Not permitted

- Live animals, animal tissues not shed naturally, microorganisms, other cell or tissue samples
- Biological toxins
- Cultures (eg. petri dishes, ziplocs with spores)
- Soil (contains organic material)
- Sensational or offensive images of humans