



## **GUIDELINES FOR GUILLOTINE USE**

Guillotines may be used as an approved method of euthanasia in animal protocols. However, proper sharpening, testing, and maintenance are required to ensure that devices function as intended and that both animals and personnel are protected. The AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (2020 Edition) define decapitation as an acceptable method under certain conditions, provided it is required by the experimental design, approved by the IACUC, and performed correctly. The following guidelines apply to guillotine use:

### **General Maintenance:**

- The device must be kept in good working order, serviced regularly, and decontaminated between uses.
- Prior to any procedure, the user must test that the equipment is operating smoothly and free of any rust or other contaminants.
- After each use, the entire guillotine should be rinsed under cold water to remove any material. After removing gross contamination, the unit must be thoroughly disinfected (e.g., soap and water, Rescue®). A final 70% ethanol rinse will assist evaporation and reduce the need to hand-dry equipment.
- Guillotines must be handled with care during cleaning

### **Blade Sharpness:**

- Devices in use must have their blades sharpened at least once per year. There are several commercial options for this service, and labs are permitted to sharpen in-house, provided they can document adequate sharpness (see below).
- The “sharpened on” date must be documented on every device. If a device is not in use, it should be marked accordingly. The IACUC will check dates on all guillotines during semi-annual inspections.
- Recommendations for assessing blade sharpness: a guillotine is sharp enough if it cuts through a piece of paper without dragging it between the blades, sticking, or tearing. Alternatively, a wide rubber band can be used. The blade should be able to slice through the rubber band with minimal pressure.
- The IACUC requires that guillotine sharpness is tested before beginning procedures on a given day. If the device is being used frequently, additional tests are required between procedures. Sharpness testing must be documented and will be reviewed during semi-annual inspections. The next page contains a testing log template. If a lab has more than one guillotine, each unit must be labeled individually and have its own corresponding sharpness-testing log.



