Policy Section

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AMONG A NUMBER OF CHANGES to the scientific landscape of the past years is a marked increase in the level of regulatory scrutiny over fish-related research activities.¹ Perhaps the best example of this comes from the United States, where the primary reference document used by institutions to ensure compliance with regulatory and animal welfare requirements, the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, was substantially edited in 2011 to include specific information and chapters on aquatic animals.² Similar changes to regulatory documents related to the care and use of laboratory animals have been made or are ongoing in Canada,³ Europe,^{4,5} and elsewhere.

These changes are both necessary and welcome. The seemingly ever-increasing scale and complexity of research being done with aquatic animals—zebrafish especially—provide a constantly shifting challenge for animal caretakers and researchers to maximize the well-being of research subjects at the same time as promoting efficiency, productivity, and reproducibility of experiments. The establishment of ethical, fair, biologically based, and performance-driven regulatory policy governing the care and use of laboratory animals helps ensure that best practices are in place to achieve these complex and sometimes conflicting goals.

With the best intentions on all sides of the equation—regulators and experts who formulate and promulgate policy, animal caretakers, veterinarians, institutional compliance officers, and researchers—interpretations and appropriate implementation of guidelines are often not a straightforward task. This is especially the case where policy has been deliberately formulated to allow for some degree of local or performance-based interpretation. Ultimately, compliance necessitates interactions between all stakeholders involved in animal care, but sometimes opinions about the *correct* interpretation of guidelines differ. In some cases, this leads to uncertainty about what the intended regulation entails and how best to follow it.

To facilitate this necessary exchange of information, we propose to establish a new column in *Zebrafish*, specifically dedicated to initiating conversations about animal care policies and compliance for the zebrafish community. We invite future contributions regarding welfare compliance issues, and hope

to provide a forum for a civil discussion that will ultimately support both animal well-being and research progress.

In this issue, we received two contributions appropriate to start these conversations. The first poses a question that many institutions around the world grapple with: at what time during zebrafish development should the animals be subject to regulatory compliance (Moulder). The second contribution, submitted from several research units in Canada, details the great difficulties importing zebrafish into Canada as a result of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) listing zebrafish as a susceptible species for Spring Viremia of Carp Virus. In both cases, we contacted the corresponding agencies (The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and CFIA, respectively) to respond or comment. These responses will be published in the policy section of a subsequent issue of the journal. Additional, *brief*, informed comments and solutions from readers are also welcome. Please address these to the editors C.L. and Z.V.

References

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3. Canadian Council on Animal Care. Guidelines on the care and use of fish in research, teaching, and testing. (2005). Available at www.ccac.ca
4. Reed B, Jennings M. Guidance on the housing and care of Zebrafish *Danio rerio*. *Res Anim Dep Sci Group RSPCA* 2011;1–27.
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