Southern Cross University

Animal Ethics Committee

The Role of Flow Charts and Timelines in Animal Ethics Applications

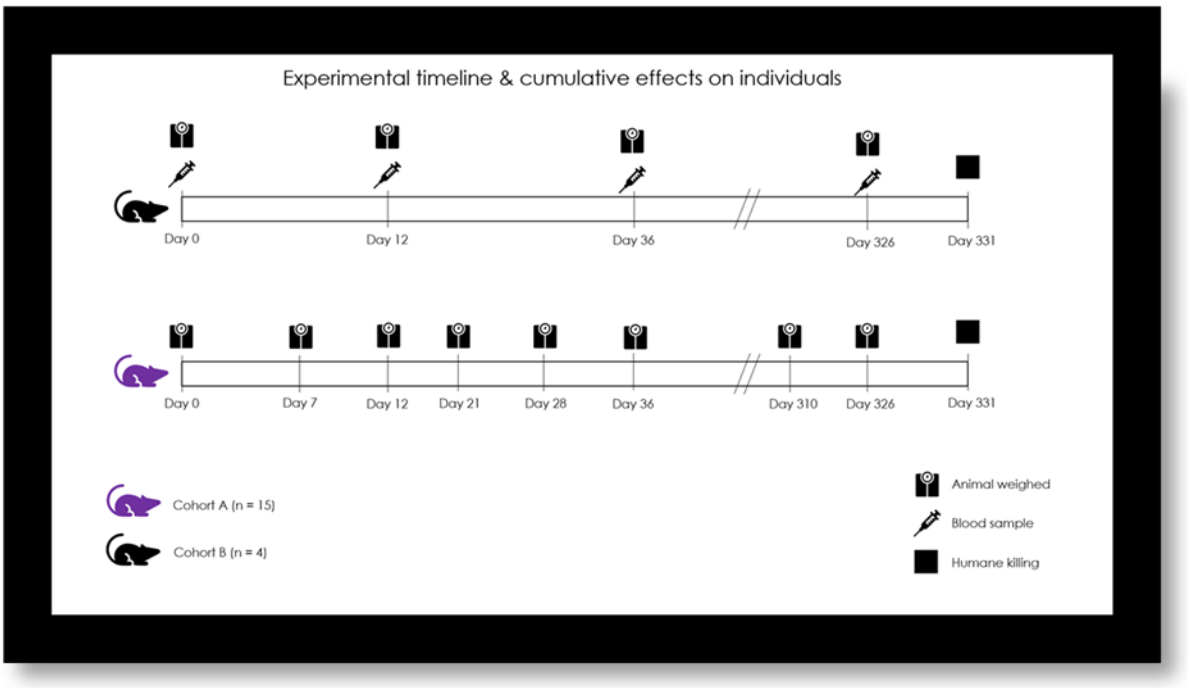
Animal ethics applications are essential for ensuring that research involving animals is conducted responsibly, ethically, and in accordance with the Animal Code. These applications often require detailed descriptions of experimental procedures, animal handling, and welfare considerations. However, the complexity of research protocols can make it challenging for ethics committees to quickly grasp the full scope of a project. This is where flow charts and timelines become invaluable tools.

Why Use Flow Charts?

Flow charts provide a visual representation of the sequence of procedures in a study. They help to:

- Clarify complex protocols by breaking them down into discrete, logical steps.
- Highlight decision points, such as criteria for euthanasia or intervention.
- Improve communication between researchers and ethics committees.
- Reduce ambiguity, ensuring that reviewers understand what will happen and when.

Flow charts are especially useful in studies involving multiple phases, treatments, or conditional procedures. They allow reviewers to see the entire process at a glance, which can speed up approval and reduce the need for revisions.



Why Use Timelines?

Timelines complement flow charts by showing when each step occurs over the course of the study. They help to:

- Demonstrate the duration of animal involvement, which is critical for assessing welfare impacts.
- Identify periods of increased risk or stress, such as surgical recovery or behavioural testing.
- Ensure compliance with guidelines on housing, monitoring, and post-procedural care.
- Coordinate resources, such as staffing and facility availability.

Timeline Example

Day	Activity	Details
0–1	Animal arrival	Health check, cage assignment, initial observation
2–7	Acclimatisation	Daily monitoring, environmental enrichment, baseline weight recording
8	Habituation to testing environment	Exposure to behavioural testing apparatus without stimuli
9–10	Baseline behavioural testing	Tests such as maze navigation or object recognition to assess initial cognitive function
11–20	Compound administration	Daily oral dosing; monitor for adverse effects, record weight and behaviour
13 & 17	Interim health checks	Detailed physical exams, welfare scoring
21	Post-treatment behavioural testing begins	Repeat of baseline tests to assess changes in cognitive function
22	Continued behavioural testing	Additional trials or alternate cognitive tasks
23	Final behavioural testing	Final data collection, prepare for tissue sampling
24	Euthanasia and tissue collection	Humane euthanasia, organ/tissue harvest for biochemical analysis