Background:
The AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (2013) states that decapitation can be used to euthanize rodents, small rabbits, poultry and birds, some fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Guillotines designed to accomplish decapitation in a uniformly instantaneous manner are commercially available. Guillotines are not commercially available for smaller animals (e.g., neonatal rodents; zebra fish), but sharp scissors or a razor/scalpel blade might be used for this purpose.

Policy:
I. All personnel performing live animal decapitation must be properly trained and should perform this procedure under the direct supervision of an experienced operator until competency is assured.
II. All animals must be anesthetized during decapitation unless scientific justification for non-anesthetized decapitation is in the approved animal use protocol. The use of plastic cones (e.g., DecapiCones®, Braintree Scientific, Inc.) for non-anesthetized decapitation is highly recommended.
III. Equipment used for decapitation should be maintained in good working order, serviced on a frequency that assures proper function of the mechanism and blade sharpness, and of the appropriate size for the animal undergoing the procedure. Examples include:
   • Guillotine (commercially manufactured): adult rats; hamsters; guinea pigs; gerbils; small rabbits.
   • Sharp scissors or razor/scalpel blade: mice (all ages); neonatal/juvenile rats; zebrafish; small amphibians; small birds (e.g., zebra finch); non-venomous reptiles.
IV. Documentation of the dates of guillotine or scissors blade sharpening should be maintained. Razor or scalpel blades must be replaced as soon as they start to become dull.

Procedures:
I. Guillotine/Scissors Routine Maintenance
   A. Clean the guillotine or scissors daily after each use as follows:
      1. Rinse and scrub when necessary under fast-running water to remove all blood and tissue.
      2. Scrub with disinfectant to reduce microbial contamination.
      3. Rinse a final time with alcohol to ensure evaporation and to minimize the need to hand-dry the device.
4. Turn the guillotine upside down with the blades open or open the scissor blades to facilitate drying.

B. Ensure that the guillotine or scissors is lubricated with silicone spray as needed or as per manufacturer’s recommendation.

II. Guillotine/Scissors Inspection and Sharpening

A. Guillotine and scissor blades should be inspected and sharpened as often as needed. Frequency of sharpening will depend upon the animal species involved and frequency of use.

B. The Principal Investigator is responsible for re-sharpening or replacing guillotine blades or scissors when it is necessary.

C. Blade sharpening may be done by any reputable tool-sharpening company. OHSU Campus Facilities commonly uses the following business for their sharpening needs:

Oregon Carbide Saw
1713 SE 7th Ave, Portland, OR 97214
503-235-8559 or toll free 1-866-235-8559

REFERENCES
3. PHS Policy IV,C,1,g
4. NIH/OLAW NOT-OD-02-062
5. APHIS/AC Policy 3
6. AWAR §2.31,d,1,xi