

Office of Laboratory Animal Care

IACUC Guidelines

Rodent Health Monitoring, Record Keeping, and Communication

Date Implemented: 10/13/14

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PURPOSE/BACKGROUND: The health of research animals is essential to quality reproducible research. The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (Eighth Edition, Revised 2011) specifies that “Animals should be observed and cared for by qualified personnel every day, including weekends and holidays, both to safeguard their well-being and to satisfy research requirements.” It is important that personnel who support and use animals are trained and competent to identify and communicate problems that may affect the welfare of animals and scientific goals. According to the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* appropriate health records must be maintained for animals used or produced for teaching or research. Communication between OLAC Staff, Veterinarians, and Laboratory Staff is an essential part of ensuring animals are monitored appropriately and medically cared for, while working to meet research goals.

RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS

OLAC Staff (OS)

Veterinary Staff (VS)

Principal Investigator (PI)

Laboratory Personnel (LP)

RELATED GUIDELINES/POLICIES/SOPs

Veterinary Care Program

Guidelines for Assessing the Health and Condition of Rodents

Record Keeping for Research Animals: Experimental Procedures

Surgical Management, Monitoring and Record Keeping

OLAC SOP for Common Minor Medical Conditions and Treatments in Rodents

*All rodents housed at SDSU must be monitored daily by trained individuals to assess health and well-being. If species are not monitored daily by OS, for example, if experimental needs require that only LP enter a housing room or handle animal cages, the PI must detail this in their approved IACUC protocol and are also required to follow the following Guidelines.

1.0 Health Monitoring

- 1.1 OS are responsible for observing rodents once a day to ensure health and well-being. Physical and behavioral health concerns are recorded and communicated to VS and LP daily.
- 1.2 Some experiments and certain transgenic or genetically modified strains of rodents may result in significant clinical findings, up to and including death. These animals may require additional, and/or more frequent monitoring by LP and must be identified so OS will know what animals require this additional monitoring. Details of expected clinical findings, disease progression, phenotypes, how the animals will be monitored (including endpoint criteria) must be included in the approved IACUC protocol.

2.0 Training

- 2.1 All responsible individuals working with rodents must read the Guidelines for Assessing Health and Condition of Rodents.
- 2.2 OS receive training from the VS and/or the OLAC manager on identifying animal health issues, recording and communicating issues, and administering treatments.
- 2.3 LP may receive training from their PI or other LP on protocol procedures and specific health monitoring and treatments for animals used on approved IACUC protocol. LP may also receive training from OS on common treatments for health concerns that arise. VS are also available as needed to supplement training for LP.

3.0 Record Keeping

- 3.1 Records of animal monitoring and treatment by OS, VS, and LP must be kept and indicate the date, the individual conducting the observation/treatment, and any relevant findings. These records must be kept for a period of 3 years and made available upon request to VS, IACUC Personnel, and appropriate outside regulatory agencies.
- 3.2 OS are responsible for recording that animal health has been checked, and that food and water levels and environmental conditions are acceptable and within range, and record this daily on the “Animal Room and Care Log”. This is a monthly log that is maintained in the animal housing room. Previous months’ logs may be removed from the housing room and filed in the OLAC office and be made available upon request.
- 3.3 Physical and/or behavioral concerns must be recorded in the “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log” located in the OLAC Office, and accessible to OS and VS.
- 3.4 OS will make initial entries in the “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log” daily.
- 3.5 If LP make health observations, they will communicate them to OS and VS. OS will assess the animal(s) at the earliest opportunity and record their assessment in the “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log”.

- 3.6 When VS does rounds to assess and evaluate reported concerns, they will record findings and recommended treatment plans in the “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log”.
- 3.7 All “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log” sheets with active cases will be maintained in a central and accessible area in the OLAC Office. Sheets that only contain resolved cases will be archived in the OLAC Office.

4.0 Communication

- 4.1 Prompt and effective communication between OS, VS, and LP regarding physical or behavioral concerns, treatments, and progress of animal care are essential in supporting quality research and the health and wellbeing of the animals. The LP who should be included in communications about health issues is determined by the PI, and the PI is always included in notification emails.
- 4.2 Daily observations made by OS that indicate a physical or behavioral abnormality will be logged at the cage level on a pink “HEALTH” card that is placed vertically behind the cage identification card. The initial observations and subsequent treatments and/or monitoring are noted on the card so that any OS, LP, or VS may easily determine what the issue is, who is monitoring/treating, and how often.
- 4.3 All “HEALTH” observations and any standard treatments that have been initiated will be emailed by OS to LP and VS by the end of the day. These email notifications may include questions by OS and/or VS about clinical history or experimental endpoints, etc., and it is the responsibility of the PI or designated LP to respond promptly. Information about any animals that have been found dead will also be emailed at the end of the day.
- 4.4 In the case of an urgent issue that requires an immediate response from LP before the end of the day, email notifications will start with “URGENT” in the subject line. If humane euthanasia is being requested by OS or VS due to the nature of the health issue, LP must respond within the time frame set forth in the notification. Whenever possible OS will attempt to make contact with LP by phone/text if a response is needed within a few hours. LP must indicate that euthanasia was completed or request VS to reevaluate based on specific approved protocol information. Though every effort is made to ensure that experimental data is not lost by allowing LP to euthanize an animal, if LP are unavailable or fail to respond in a timely manner, VS may direct OS to euthanize the animal for humane purposes.
- 4.5 When VS performs rounds and evaluates health issues, they will communicate findings in the “Health Observations/Veterinary Medical Log” and communicate with OS regarding necessary treatments, etc. VS findings/questions/comments may be emailed to LP by OS or VS, as determined by VS.
- 4.6 An SOP for “Common Minor Medical Conditions and Treatments in Rodents” will be maintained by the Office of Laboratory Animal Care (OLAC) and reviewed annually by VS. This SOP will be sent annually to PI’s to notify them of the “blanket” treatments and/or supplemental care that OS will initiate if warranted. If a PI needs to opt out of any/all “blanket” treatments for experimental reasons, OS and VS must be notified in advance and some exemptions may need to be outlined in

the approved IACUC protocol. PI may consult with VS if they have questions/concerns about “blanket” treatments and supplemental care.