



Policy on Oversight of Investigator-Maintained Animal Colonies

Background: Federal regulations specify that animal care must be provided by qualified personnel and that the attending veterinarian has the authority to ensure adequate veterinary care and oversee other aspects of animal care and use. In some cases, groups of vertebrate animals, including fish and amphibians--whether housed in conventional animal facilities, laboratories, or satellite facilities--are maintained by research staff. In addition, under certain circumstances, investigators provide veterinary care to animals on their animal use protocols. Following a period of reported inconsistencies in care or documentation of care, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) implemented, beginning in January 2000, a policy that required professional animal care staff to oversee all animal care and that the Division of Animal Resources (DAR) veterinary staff oversee veterinary care provided by investigators. This policy was revised in August 2000 to allow for at least weekly oversight of investigator-maintained colonies.

Policy: Principal investigators (PI's) who are approved by the IACUC to provide either animal care (husbandry, sanitation, and/or daily monitoring), veterinary care, or both to animals assigned to an animal use protocol are subject to oversight by the DAR and by professional animal care staff employed by academic units with animal care facilities.

Implementation:

Role of the Investigator: PI's who intend to provide their own animal husbandry or veterinary care must justify this in the pertinent animal use protocols and provide to the DAR a written description of the care to be provided.

Animal Care Provided By Investigators: Animal care must be consistent with that provided by professional animal care staff and must meet requirements described in the Guide, Ag Guide, and the AWR. Written descriptions of care must include daily observation of all animals; methods and frequencies for provision of feed, water, and clean bedding when appropriate; cage, tank, housing accessories and room sanitation methods and frequency; and the names and qualifications of those persons providing care. A template for written husbandry procedures is available for download [here](#). Daily observation of animals, monitoring of environmental parameters such as room or water temperatures, feeding and watering, and sanitation must be documented and posted near animal enclosures. This may be a checklist or log with space provided for care providers to initial completed tasks each day. Logs should also include information on receipt of new animals, daily census, and removal of animals due to experimental use, transfer to another protocol or site, or unanticipated deaths.

Veterinary Care Provided by Investigators: PI's who provide their own veterinary care must provide written descriptions of the medical care program, as well as their qualifications, and must maintain animal medical records in accordance with currently acceptable professional standards for record keeping. In addition, medical records must be available to the DAR and accurately reflect any plans for veterinary care that have been described in animal use protocols. The DAR or appropriate agricultural

clinical veterinary service must be notified of medical concerns when they are identified. A template is available for download [here](#).

Role of the Animal Care Unit: The animal care unit is responsible for oversight of animal care in all animal holding areas. The animal care staff visits each animal holding area at least once every 7 days to assure that adequate care has been provided in accordance with written husbandry procedures. Animal care staff reports failures to comply with written procedures to the PI and DAR. The DAR will determine after consultation with the PI when repeated failure to provide or document adequate care requires more frequent oversight by the animal care staff.

Role of the Academic Unit: The academic unit is responsible for arranging key or card access for the animal care staff and the DAR to those animal holding areas outside of primary animal care facilities.

Division of Animal Resources (DAR) Oversight: Veterinary staff from the DAR visits animal care units, as well as investigator-maintained animal colonies, on monthly rounds and checks both medical records or posted husbandry records. When an investigator-maintained animal room is not located in an academic unit with an established animal care staff, weekly oversight will be provided by DAR staff. In the event of problems, the DAR will pursue appropriate corrective actions, which may include increased frequency of oversight or a report to the IACUC.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Oversight: The IACUC will visit all animal holding rooms at least semiannually and prior to allowing housing of animals in an area not previously approved for that purpose. During visits, the IACUC may request or inspect records of animal husbandry and veterinary care, including animal medical records. The IACUC will take actions such as requesting additional oversight or direct care by professional staff when needed to insure adequate care of animals.

Reference(s):

- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide), NRC, 1996
- Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching (Ag Guide), FASS, 1999
- Animal Welfare Regulations (AWR), 9 CFR, chapter I, subchapter A
- U.S. Government Principles for the Care and Use of Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training, 1983

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