

Office of Research Support and Compliance

Vice President for Research, Scholarship and Creative Endeavors

Guidelines for Veterinary Care, Health Checks, and Illness Reporting

The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

These guidelines have been written to assist faculty, staff, and students in performing vertebrate animal procedures in a humane manner and complying with pertinent regulatory requirements. Under some circumstances deviations from these procedures may be indicated but such variances must be approved in advance by the IACUC.

This document provides information to be used when planning and performing procedures using vertebrate animals for research, teaching, or other purposes at The University of Texas at Austin (University). These requirements are not limited to Animal Resources Center (ARC) animal care staff, nor to animals housed in the Animal Resources Center. This guideline is applicable to all locations where vertebrate animals are maintained for biomedical research as part of University research and/or teaching projects. It is organized into five sections:

Section A – Requirements

Section B – Reporting for Colonies in Centrally-Managed Locations

Section C – Reporting for ARC-managed non-centrally located facilities

Section D – Reporting for Satellite Locations

Section E – Daily checks and post-procedural monitoring during emergency events

Section F – Notification of the IACUC

Section G – Acknowledgements

Section A – Requirements

1. Trained personnel who are familiar with the species must check all animals daily for signs of disease or illness. (Source: *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, National Research Council, 2011.)
2. The requirement for daily observations includes weekend, holidays and shutdown periods.
3. Performance of health checks must be documented daily in a room log or tracking sheet by the person performing these checks. Initials should be used, rather than just checking a box.
4. If sick or injured animals are found either during routine daily checks or while other duties are being performed in an animal area, the appropriate persons must be promptly notified. Emergency contact information should be posted in animal housing areas to facilitate prompt reporting.
5. In addition to spontaneous disease conditions, monitoring and reporting must also include unanticipated consequences or adverse events associated with research use, including, but not limited to, surgery, drug treatment, genetic manipulations, handling and restraint, mechanical failures in environmental control systems, and transport or shipping (including animals that are injured or dead upon arrival). Unanticipated mortality, morbidity, pain, distress or other complications as a result of experimental procedures in addition to or in excess of that described in the approved protocol must also be reported to the IACUC or ARC veterinary staff.
6. All treatment of research animals with drugs or chemical agents (including antibiotics, parasite treatments, aquatic dips, etc.) must be either performed by an ARC veterinarian or be pre-authorized by an ARC

veterinarian. The most common way for pre-authorization to be obtained is for the treatment to be included in an approved IACUC protocol. Pre-authorization for typical colony management treatments (e.g. quarantine treatments for newly-acquired fish or treatment for common spontaneous health conditions in a satellite area) can also be obtained by including specific treatment plans into a satellite area standard operating procedure (SOP) that is explicitly reviewed and approved by an ARC veterinarian. If a medical treatment or a surgical correction (e.g. re-suturing an incision that dehiscence) appears necessary but isn't covered by an approved protocol or SOP, then a veterinary consultation with an ARC vet must be obtained prior to taking action.

Section B – Reporting for Colonies in the ARC

Multi-copy morbidity/mortality reporting forms are to be used to report health issues. The form should be completely filled out, and the cardboard copy should be placed in the cage cardholder or otherwise secured to the cage/tank/pen to identify the animal. The remaining 2 paper sheets should be turned in to the veterinary technician office on the second floor of the ARC, room number 2.160. If any animal appears to be in immediate need of attention, an on call veterinarian may be contacted directly by calling (512) 205-2107.

Section C – Reporting for ARC-managed non-centrally located facilities

Multi-copy morbidity/mortality reporting forms are to be used. The form should be completely filled out, and the cardboard copy should be placed in the cage cardholder or otherwise secured to the cage/tank/pen to identify the animal. A picture of the card should be sent to the ARC veterinary staff at (vetstaff@austin.utexas.edu). If the animal appears to be in immediate need of attention, the On Call Clinical Veterinarian may be reached at 512-205-2107.

Section D- Reporting for Satellite Locations

Each satellite must have a plan to assure prompt reporting of animal health issues or research complications to a knowledgeable person who has authority to make decisions and access to the appropriate means of alleviating pain or distress. In some cases, the investigator or trained staff may be experts in the care of particular species. Unless specific action plans are pre-approved in an IACUC-approved animal care and use protocol, however, the veterinary staff must be consulted whenever animals are in need of medical care due to illness or injury (see #6 under Section A above). Satellite facilities must report morbidity/mortality to the ARC by emailing vetstaff@austin.utexas.edu. The report must include the protocol number, species, specific location of animal(s) (building, room, ID on cage or tank), lab point of contact, and the health concern. For urgent matters, personnel may also directly contact the Clinical Veterinarian on call as is described in Sections A and B, above.

Section E – Daily checks and post-procedural monitoring during emergency events

During a state of emergency (such as a severe winter storm) that makes traveling to campus difficult and/or dangerous, researchers responsible for daily observations and post-procedural observation and care can contact the ARC veterinary staff to discuss the status of their animals and the existing IACUC-approved post-operative plan to determine if there is an alternative strategy that adequately addresses analgesic and animal welfare concerns and/or utilizes other trained personnel that may be available. However, the provision of adequate care may still require trained laboratory representatives to travel to campus. PIs should plan in advance to cross-train their staff so that backup personnel (such as those that live closest to campus) will be available as needed. When extreme weather events are anticipated, PIs should plan experiments accordingly.

Section F – Notification of the IACUC

Significant incidents involving unanticipated illness or death, as part of a research project, must be reported to the IACUC. The ARC will work with the research group to assure that the IACUC is informed about such complications as needed.

Section G – Acknowledgements

This document contains content that was adapted from materials obtained from the ARC guideline entitled “Veterinary Care, Health Checks and Illness Reporting, 2/24/09 V2.”

Approval Date	Change(s) Approved
10/10/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section E- Daily checks and post-procedural monitoring during emergency events
01/10/2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section A – # 6 added• Section D – instructions for reporting morbidity/ mortality updated