



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

DATE: September 27, 2023
TO: Addressees
FROM: Deputy Director for Intramural Research, NIH
SUBJECT: Timely Assessment and Resolution of Animal Issues Involving Potential Pain and/or Distress

This memorandum is an update of a similar memorandum dated May 14, 2014. The NIH Intramural Research Program (IRP) remains committed to research animal welfare. Research animals housed in NIH facilities must be monitored daily to assess their health and well-being. A timely, appropriate response is required when observations by principal investigators, veterinarians, animal care technicians, or others, raise concerns about the existence of potential pain and/or distress. Emergency or acute conditions call for a veterinary response on the same day, although other issues, e.g., overcrowding, etc., may be appropriately handled within 24 hours. Sound judgment by those trained in the health and well-being of research animals is essential in making appropriate decisions regarding the need to notify the responsible veterinarian.

As described in the [NIH Policy Manual Chapter 3040-2](#), the [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#), [PHS Policy](#), and the [Animal Welfare Act and Regulations](#), the Attending Veterinarian (AV), most commonly the IC Animal Program Director in the IRP, is ultimately responsible for the health and well-being of all laboratory animals used at the IC and must be provided the necessary authority, access, and resources to manage the program of veterinary care. As such, the AV (or designee) is responsible for discussing observations with the principal investigator (or designee) to clarify the animal's condition and the need for intervention. To this end, clear, timely communications among all those involved in animal care and use are essential.

To formalize that process, the attached, "Instructions for Emergency Animal Treatment and Care" form was incorporated as a component of the NIH Animal Study Proposal (ASP) template. The form serves to provide primary and alternate points of contact for both during and after work hours, to include weekends and holidays, and specifies what restrictions, if any, may affect veterinary treatment of animals covered by each ASP, and any research criteria which may affect the method of euthanasia, if that decision is made by the veterinarian.

Additionally, the ARAC [Guidelines for Communication Between User and Lead ACUCs, Oversight of Animal Study Proposal Activities and Management in Animal Facilities provides important information on communications in Shared and Central Animal Facilities](#). I continue to expect all NIH IRP Animal Care and Use program participants to read and comply with this document, which by virtue of this memorandum, is considered NIH IRP policy.

Please contact me, or the Director, Office of Animal Care and Use at 301-496-5424 if additional information or clarifications are required.

Nina F. Schor, M.D., Ph.D.

Attachment

Addressees:

IC Scientific Directors
IC ACUC Members
IC Animal Program Directors
IC Facility Veterinarians and Animal Facility Managers
NIH IRP Principal Investigators and Animal Users

Instructions for Emergency Animal Treatment and Care

General Information:

ASP Number:	PI Name:	ASP Title:
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Point of Contact (POC) Information:

Name	Order of Contact	Work Phone	Other Phone

Animal Information:

Species	Housing Location(s)	Procedure(s)	Potential or Expected Complications	Circumstances Requiring Contact	Treatment Restrictions

Criteria for Euthanasia:

Is euthanasia permitted at veterinarian's discretion if animal is in poor condition, severe pain, and/or distress?	YES [] NO []
• If yes, notify the POC?	YES [] NO []
• If yes, is there a requested euthanasia agent and route of administration? • If so, please specify:	YES [] NO []
• If yes, are there specific criteria for euthanasia? • If so, please specify:	YES [] NO []

When Animals are Found Dead or Euthanized:

Notify POC?	YES [] NO []
Refrigerate carcass?	YES [] NO []
Dispose of carcass?	YES [] NO []
Submit to DVR for necropsy? • If yes, please provide CAN:	YES [] NO []

Additional Comments:

Signature:

Principal Investigator:

In an emergency, the veterinarian will take the appropriate action if no response is received from the PI/POC within 30 minutes of a notification attempt.