

Guidelines for Animal Medical Record Keeping and Transfer of Records Between NIH Intramural Animal Facilities

Purpose: Medical records are an essential component of the veterinary care program and provide documentation of the care given to an animal. In addition, complete medical records are required by the [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#)¹ and Animal Welfare Act Regulations.²

Record Keeping:

- This guideline specifically refers to records maintained for USDA regulated species with an emphasis on non-rodent species.
- Individual animal records will be created for regulated, non-rodent, species on receipt or weaning. Records may be maintained either electronically or in hard copy. Scanned documents with signatures are considered official.
- Different parts of a medical record may be kept in different locations as long as all parts are readily retrievable and reviewable by the veterinary, research, and Institute/Center Animal Care and Use Committee (IC ACUC) staff, as well as for external oversight.
- All entries in the medical record will be dated and indicate the originator of the entry and be legible to someone other than the writer.
- Individual animal records will include general information (species, Date of Birth/age, sex, owning institute and investigator), import documents, regulatory and vendor information, and a “Master Problem List” which itemizes ongoing medical conditions and research manipulations that have a long standing impact on the animal’s health.³
- All “Master Problem List” entries will be short and concise. Examples of items to note on this list include spontaneous and research-related illnesses, adverse drug reactions, exposure to adjuvants containing *Mycobacterium*, and surgeries. Any chronically implanted catheters, pumps, or tissue transplants should be noted.
- Medical records for non-rodents will be maintained in a manner that adequately communicates pertinent medical information to any veterinarian receiving the record. At a minimum, medical records typically contain the following components as described by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine public statement on medical records.⁴
 1. Identification of animal or group;
 2. Clinical information including results of physical examinations, behavior of the animal and notations regarding observed abnormalities, illnesses and/ or injuries;
 3. Immunizations and other prophylactic treatments and procedures as appropriate for the species;
 4. Documentation of diagnostic tests and how they were interpreted;
 5. Reference to research interventions, where appropriate;
 6. Treatment prescribed, and provided, along with the clinical response and any follow-up needed;
 7. Surgery, anesthesia, analgesia and peri-/ post-operative care;
 8. Control of pain and distress;
 9. Documentation of euthanasia or other disposition;

10. Documentation of necropsy findings, if indicated.

An example hard copy medical record is attached and can be used as a template.

Transfer of Records:

- The original record or a complete, legible copy (paper or electronic) will be sent with the animal when it is permanently transferred between NIH facilities. A truncated copy containing a summary of recent health information and treatments may accompany animals temporarily transferred between facilities for imaging or surgical procedures.
- The originating facility is responsible for implementing a system to indicate that the record/animal in question has left the facility and if it is expected to return, by what date. If the animal is not to return to the facility (due to permanent transfer or death) or the return date is unknown, documentation that the animal has been removed from the facility is placed into the animal's record. The original or a copy of the record is maintained on file for a minimum of three years after the animal's disposition or death.
- If the receiving facility received what it considers to be an incomplete animal record, it is their responsibility to contact the sending facility to obtain missing documents.

Archiving Medical Records:

- When an animal is euthanized (or dies) while on study, the animal's complete medical record (original or copy) will be sent upon request to the IC Animal Program Director (or designee) by the Facility Veterinarian or Facility Manager, with the facility keeping the original or a copy (paper or electronic).
- If desired, hard copies of medical records may be scanned in and stored in an unchangeable electronic format e.g. pdf or tif file. A method for retrieving scanned in records must be in place.

Medical Records Disposition:

- All medical records pertinent to an animal must be maintained by the IC for the duration of the animal study plus three years after the animal's final disposition per federal regulation. The end of an animal study is the 3-yr expiration date of the IC ACUC approved animal study proposal.

Approved – 05/11/2011

Revised - 12/10/2014

References:

1. [*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*](#), ILAR, NAS, Eighth Edition, 2011.
2. USDA Animal Welfare Act Regulations. [Title 9: Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 1, Subchapter A: Animal Welfare.](#)
3. Gardner H and Hines S. The Academic SOAP. http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/dc/facilitators/DC-docs/SOAP_Beginners-Guide.pdf
4. Field K, et. al. Medical Records for Animals Used in Research, Teaching, and Testing: Public Statements from the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine. [ILAR J. 2007. 48\(1\):37-41.](#)

