

Guidelines for NIH Rodent Transportation

A. General

1. The Institute/Center (IC) Veterinarian or IC Animal Transportation Coordinator is responsible for the oversight of rodent transportation within their program and assurance that all transportation is handled in accordance with all applicable laws, policies and guidelines. This includes obtaining transportation approval before animals are moved and requesting confirmation of their arrival. The IC Animal Program Director (APD) or their designee serves as the primary source of information relating to the approval of transport enclosures, means of transport, receipt and shipment of animals within their IC and can grant exceptions to these guidelines when it is considered in the best interest of the animal(s). The IC Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC), with the Office of Animal Care and Use (OACU), as a resource will resolve conflicts regarding animal transportation.
2. Transportation of animals shall be done in a direct and timely manner, avoiding public areas and areas primarily used by NIH employees and patients.
3. All methods of transporting NIH animals must provide for the health and welfare of the animals.
4. Rodents shall not be transported with any other animal, substance and/or device that may be expected to be injurious to their health or welfare.
5. Care shall be exercised in handling enclosures (i.e. approved transport boxes, containers, cages, etc.) used to transport rodents. They shall not be tossed, dropped, or stacked in a manner that may reasonably be expected to result in their falling. During transport, containers or cages should not be carried in any way that may cause physical trauma or stress to the animal(s) or limit proper cage ventilation.
6. Approved transport cages/boxes/containers must be used. These vary depending on the distance and/or purpose of the transportation. The enclosure must be resistant to escape, provide adequate ventilation, and, as needed, provide protection from the elements.
7. Minimum label requirements for all transport boxes/containers should include the words "Live Animals" and an arrow indicating the up position. Appropriate labeling for biohazards and/or radiation may also be required.
8. Temperature extremes (less than 45F or greater than 85F) are to be avoided when transporting animals. If movement of animals is necessary, precautions [e.g., climate-controlled vehicle, extra insulation (cold weather), larger ventilated box with fewer animals (hot weather)] are required.
9. The [Division of Veterinary Resources \(DVR\) Transportation Service](#) is available for transporting animals between buildings on the NIH Bethesda campus, to other NIH locations [e.g., NIH Animal Center (NIHAC), NIDA (Baltimore), NIA (Baltimore)], local airports, and other areas within the greater Washington metropolitan area. Arrangements can be made for scheduling animal deliveries by contacting DVR Transportation at the above link. Ideally a 48-hour notice is required prior to pickup.
10. Personal vehicles are not to be used for animal transportation

B. Movement of animals within an NIH building

1. Occupants of the building should be protected from allergens of animal origin, microorganisms, chemicals, radioactive materials and escaped animals. Consult with your veterinarian/transportation coordinator and the Division of Occupational Health & Safety (DOHS) for the correct method.
2. For movement of animals **within the Clinical Center** (Building 10) and the **Clinical Research Center** (CRC) see [Research Animal Transport for the NIH Clinical Center](#). This policy addresses the correct method of movement within the Clinical Center, including the use of the appropriate elevators.

3. Movement of animals **inside the animal facility** is usually within the animal's home cage. To guard against cage flooding, the water bottle should be removed or placed spout up prior to transport. The appropriate conveyance should be verified with the Facility Manager or Facility Veterinarian.
4. Movement of animals from the **animal facility to a laboratory within the same building** may require the use of an approved container other than the animal's home cage [e.g., a filtered cardboard NIH animal transport box or a [cylindrical animal transport container](#)]. The appropriate conveyance should be verified with the Facility Manager or Facility Veterinarian.
5. Transport boxes/cages/containers that are contaminated with biological, chemical or radiological hazards must be disposed of according to [the NIH Waste Disposal Guide](#). Transport boxes/cages/containers that are not contaminated with biological, chemical, or radiological hazards may be disposed of as general waste. Do not leave them in public areas.

C. Moving animal between buildings on the NIH Bethesda campus ([NIH Internal Transfers](#))

1. Transport of rodents should protect building occupants from allergens of animal origin, microorganisms, chemicals, radioactive materials and escaped animals.
2. Transporting rodents by hand-carrying containers should be limited to travel in a direct and timely manner between buildings with the animals in escape resistant enclosures. Rodents should be protected from extremes of temperature.
3. A filtered, cardboard container should be used (a cylindrical animal transport container is not acceptable between buildings). Bedding, a "no-spill" water source and/or food may be required depending upon the animal's age, condition and length of containment.
4. For movement of animals **to the Clinical Center** (Building 10) and **the Clinical Research Center** (CRC) see the [Research Animal Transport for the NIH Clinical Center](#). This policy addresses the correct method of movement within the Clinical Center, including the use of the appropriate elevators.
5. For movement of animals **to all other buildings**, an IC Veterinarian or IC Animal Transport Coordinator should be contacted. If rodents possess biological/chemical/radiation hazards, also consult Health & Safety (see sections F. & G. below).
6. Transport boxes/cages/containers that are contaminated with biological, chemical or radiological hazards must be disposed of according to [the NIH Waste Disposal Guide](#). Transport boxes/cages/containers that are not contaminated with biological, chemical, or radiological hazards may be disposed of as general waste. Do not leave them in public areas.

D. Transportation of animals between the NIH Bethesda campus and other NIH locations, i.e. NIH Animal Center (NIHAC, Poolesville), NIDA (Baltimore), NIA (Baltimore) ([Internal Transfers](#))

1. The [DVR Transportation Service](#) or other appropriate courier for live animals must be used for transporting animals between the NIH Bethesda campus and other NIH locations.
2. A filtered, cardboard [NIH Animal Transport Box](#) should be used. Bedding, a "no-spill" water source, and/or food are required.

DI. Delivery of animals to locations outside the NIH ([Exports from NIH](#))

1. The [NIH Shipping Unit](#) (301-496-5921) is available for commercial shipping arrangements.

2. Required Forms:
 - a. [NIH Request for Shipment \(NIH 1884\)](#) – only required when the NIH is paying for the shipment.
 - b. [NIH Animal Health and Shipping Certificate \(NIH-1192\)](#)
 - c. [Animal Transfer Agreement](#)
 - d. A [Materials Transfer Agreement for the Transfer of Organisms](#) (MTA-TO) may be required. Contact your [IC Technology Development Coordinator](#).
 - e. [NIH Commercial Invoice \(NIH 1884-1\)](#) – *foreign shipments only*.
 - f. [NIH Declaration for Exportation of Biologic Materials \(NIH 2388\)](#) - *foreign shipments only*.
 - g. Some exports, particularly those to foreign countries, may require USDA forms and special requirements. Contact your IC Shipping Coordinator for details.
3. Required Transport Boxes
 - a. Continental United States
 - Filtered, cardboard [NIH animal shipping container](#). A filtered, cardboard NIH *animal shipping* container is different than a filtered, cardboard NIH *animal transport* box!
 - Rigid filtered animal shipping containers available from commercial vendors (e.g., [Taconic Transit Cage](#))
 - b. Outside continental United States
 - Rigid filtered animal shipping containers with [viewing window](#) available from commercial vendors (e.g., [Taconic Transit Cage](#))
 - c. A “no-spill” water source, food, and bedding are required.
 - d. The [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\) Live Animals Regulations](#) serve as a worldwide standard for shipping animals, domestically or internationally. IATA copyrighted regulations are revised annually. OACU maintains a copy of those regulations for IC reference.

F. Transporting live or dead animals containing radioactive isotopes

1. Animal studies involving radioactive materials or Ionizing Radiation Producing Equipment (IRPE) require an approved Animal Study Proposal (ASP) reviewed by an IC ACUC, as well as, the [Division of Radiation Safety](#) (301-496-5774,). Contact your [Health Physicist](#) for specific radiation safety guidance for animal transportation. Correct disposal of the transport box should also be confirmed with the Health Physicist.
2. Warning labels are required on enclosures used to transport live or dead animals that contain radioactive materials. Minimum label requirements include a “Caution – Radioactive Material” label and identification of the specific hazard.

G. Transporting animals treated with hazardous agents

1. NIH Policy Manual [3040-2 Animal Care and Use in the Intramural Program](#) requires that IC Animal Care and Use Committees review animal study proposals, including work with biological or chemical hazards. The transportation of animals that are to be dosed at one location and moved to another needs to be evaluated, in particular, to assure that proper containment is used to minimize occupational exposure to persons involved with the move, and to minimize environmental contamination. The [Occupational Safety and Health Specialist](#) (301-496-2346) shall be consulted for any question regarding proper transportation.

2. Rodents that have been exposed to human pathogens or toxic/carcinogenic substances and are actively shedding the hazardous material must be transported in closed systems (e.g., filtered, cardboard NIH animal transport box/container). Correct disposal of the transport box should also be confirmed with the [Occupational Safety and Health Specialist](#).
3. Warning labels are required on enclosures used to transport live or dead rodents that have been exposed to chemical or biological hazards. Minimum label requirements include a “Biological Hazard” or “Chemical Hazard” label with the specific hazard identified.
4. Carcasses of contaminated rodents must be handled according to the [NIH Waste Disposal Guide](#). Contaminated animal carcasses that are being transported to DVR for pathological examination also need to be placed in double plastic bags (primary barrier) and then into a cardboard box (secondary barrier) and must be accompanied by the [Diagnostic Submission Form](#) with a detailed history of the type and amount of hazardous material.
5. [NIH PM-3035 - Working Safely with Hazardous Biological Materials](#)
6. [NIH PM-1340-1 - Permits for Import or Export of Biological Materials](#)

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