

University of California, Merced
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Policy

Version No. 2

Policy No. 102

Notification of Principal Investigators with Sick or Injured Animals

I. Purpose:

This document delineates the responsibilities and obligations of the Department of Animal Research Services (DARS), Attending Veterinarian, and Principal Investigators (PI) concerning sick or injured animals. This document also describes the channels of communication used to notify Principal Investigators of sick or injured animals.

II. Definition:

Sick: affected with disease or ill health.

Injure: **a-** to inflict bodily hurt on **b-** to impair the soundness of.

Unattended animals: an animal whose ongoing treatment is changed or discontinued by the research lab without the veterinarian's approval and who has been identified as sick and the research lab has failed to start treatment or euthanized as recommended by the veterinarian.

III. Policy:

A. Veterinary medical care is an essential part of an animal care and use program. Adequate veterinary care consists of effective programs for:

1. Preventative medicine.
2. Surveillance, diagnoses, treatment, and control of disease, including zoonosis control.
3. Management of protocol-associated disease, disability, or other sequelae.
4. Anesthesia and analgesia.
5. Surgery and post-surgical care.
6. Assessment of animal wellbeing.
7. Euthanasia.

B. Normal observations:

1. Animals should be Bright, Alert, Responsive and Hydrated (BARH). In addition, they should be eating, drinking, urinating and defecating at a frequency and consistency considered normal for the species.
2. Behavior should be normal for the species, and individual animal.
3. Animals should be of average body condition, free of lesions, alopecia (hair loss/hairless areas), swelling or masses.
4. Animals should be breathing normally, and have no discharge from the mouth, nose, eyes or other orifices.
5. Animals should not be bleeding or have open lesions.
6. Animals should be moving with a smooth gait and not favoring any limb.
7. Animals' teeth should be of the proper length and spacing for the species. The teeth should not be overgrown or maloccluded.
8. Animals should not have bandages, sutures, or staples without a post-operative record,

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and/or pink treatment card, both of which will indicate the animal is being observed daily for post operative complications.

- C. When abnormal health is observed, decisions must be made to ensure the health and welfare of the animal.

IV. Responsibility:

- A. Department of Animal Research Services (OARS) Staff - upon finding a sick or injured animal, OARS staff will:

1. Mark the cage by placing an orange SICK ANIMAL card in the cage card holder.
2. Fill out a sick animal report containing a summary description of the animal's condition.
3. Notify the Attending Veterinarian. Depending on the urgency of the situation, this notification will be made electronically or by phone.
4. Notify the Principal Investigator and/or PI's lab/staff. Depending on the urgency of the situation, this notification will be made electronically or by telephone.

- B. Attending Veterinarian - upon receiving notification of a sick or injured animal, the attending veterinarian will:

Notify the Principal Investigator making a recommendation for either treatment or euthanasia.

- C. Principal Investigator - upon receiving a sick or injured animal notification, it is the responsibility of the PI to do one of the following:

1. Start treatment prescribed by the veterinarian within the time frame stated on the email, and record, date & initial the Treatment Card, or
2. Euthanize the animal within the time frame stated on the email, or
3. Contact the attending veterinarian within the time frame stated on the email to discuss and agree upon an alternative course of action.

***Note:** that if none of the actions described in items C (1- 3) above has occurred, the affected animal will be considered unattended and subject to euthanasia. An animal whose ongoing treatment is changed or discontinued by the research lab without the veterinarian's approval will also be considered unattended. **It is the sole responsibility of the Principal Investigator to respond to such notifications on the treatment and euthanasia of their animal. Failure of research personnel to carry out veterinary orders is considered noncompliance and reportable to the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare.**

V. Related Policies:

- Research and Instruction Using Animal Subjects (Policy 100)
- Authority of the Attending Veterinarian (Policy 101)
- Responsibility of Principal Investigators for Monitoring Laboratory Animals (106)

VI. References:

- *The Animal Welfare Act* (Public Law 89-544, amended by Public Law 91-579, Public Law 94-279,

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and Public Law 99-198)

- Institutional Animal Care and Use Guidebook (OLAW 2nd edition)
- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (8th Edition)
- PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals
- UCM Assurance of Compliance with Public Health Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, Committee on Animal Research
- UCM Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Website
- Sick Animal Reporting Standard Operating Procedure.