

**University of California, Merced**  
**Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Guidelines**

**Toe Clipping for Rodent Animal Identification Guidelines**

- I. Introduction:** The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to researchers regarding acceptable methods of tissue collection for the purpose of rodent genotyping and identification.
- II. Definitions:**  
**Toe clipping** – removal of the distal phalangeal (coffin) bone of one or more paws.
- III. Guidelines:**
- a. As stated in the [\*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals\*](#) (the Guide, p.75): "...toe-clipping should be used only when no other individual identification method is feasible. It may be the preferred method for neonatal mice up to 7 days of age...especially if toe-clipping and genotyping are combined."
  - b. Toe-clipping involves removal of the distal phalangeal bone (toe) of one or more limbs. Only one toe per foot may be removed. Aseptic practices should be followed. A pair of sharp scissors can be used for this procedure; the scissors must be disinfected in between uses. If necessary, hemostasis can be achieved by using a silver nitrate stick or Quick Stop powder, or by placing a gauze square over the site and applying gentle pressure until bleeding has stopped.
- IV. Responsibility:** Investigators should consider alternative methods of rodent identification (such as ear notching, ear tags, tattooing) to toe-clipping especially if genotyping is not needed. If toe-clipping will be used, this should be stated in the investigator's animal care and use protocol.
- V. References:**
- Animal Welfare Regulations, 9 CFR Chapter 1, Subchapter A, Part 2, Subpart C, Section 2.33(b)1-5
  - Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (2011)
  - Institutional Animal Care and Use Guidebook (OLAW 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)
  - PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals