

Rodent Quarantine Guidelines

I. Introduction:

Quarantine is the separation of newly received animals from those already in the facility until the health and microbial status of the newly received animals have been determined. An effective quarantine minimizes the chance for introduction of pathogens into an established colony. The Attending Veterinarian and Department of Animal Research Services (DARS) staff have procedures for evaluating the health and, if appropriate, the pathogen status of newly received animals. Information from vendors on animal quality should be sufficient to enable a veterinarian to determine the length of quarantine, to define the potential risks to personnel and animals within the colony, to determine whether treatment is required before animals are released from quarantine, and, in the case of rodents, to determine whether cesarean rederivation or embryo transfer is required to free the animals of specific pathogens. Rodents might not require quarantine if data from the vendor or provider are sufficiently current and complete to define the health status of the incoming animals and if the potential for exposure to pathogens during transit is considered. When quarantine is indicated, animals from one shipment are separated from animals from other shipments (not necessarily from each other) to preclude transfer of infectious agents between groups.

II. Guidelines:

In order to protect the health and pathogen-free status of all UC Merced-maintained research animals, rodents purchased or obtained from non-approved vendors* or transferred from non-commercial institutions and organizations are subject to mandatory quarantine before they can be housed in the UC Merced vivarium. This mandatory quarantine period is required regardless of any animal health screening information that may be provided by the transferring institution.

The mandatory quarantine period is, at minimum, 8 weeks and can extend for a longer period at the discretion of the Attending Veterinarian and the DARS Director. During quarantine, animals will be housed in microisolator caging and may be fed fenbendazole rodent feed for the treatment of parasites. Various diagnostic tests for common infectious agents may also be performed during the quarantine period. Use of quarantined animals is severely limited; research personnel may access the quarantine housing rooms only if prior arrangements have been made with DARS.

*Please consult with DARS at 209-228-4189/dars@ucmerced.edu for a list of approved vendors from which animals can be received directly into the UC Merced vivarium without mandatory quarantine.

III. Quarantine Options:

- In-House: The most cost-effective method to ensure the pathogen-free status of incoming animals is in-house quarantine at UC Merced. DARS maintains a rodent quarantine room.

Quarantine housing space is limited; faculty intending to transfer animals that require quarantine must contact DARS to discuss availability well in advance of the animal transfer.

- Off-Site Quarantine: Large rodent vendors such as Charles River Laboratories, The Jackson Laboratory, and Harlan have facilities in California for off-site quarantine of animals. Once animals have passed the required quarantine period and testing has shown them to be pathogen-free, they can be shipped and received directly into the UC Merced vivarium. Contact DARS for more information.
- Rederivation by Embryo Transfer: Rederivation is the most secure means for ensuring the specific pathogen-free status of genetically-modified mouse strains, particularly when there is a known infection. This procedure can be performed at UC Davis. Contact the Mouse Biology Program at UC Davis for more information.

IV. Exceptions to Quarantine Guidelines

In certain very specific circumstances, the IACUC may approve an exception to the quarantine policy and allow animals with suspect health status to be received directly into a researcher's dedicated laboratory space for use and subsequent euthanasia within a defined period of time. **Under no circumstances** can such animals be taken to or housed in the UC Merced vivarium.

Written requests for an exception to the quarantine policy are submitted to the IACUC for review and approval at a convened meeting. Exceptions will be considered only if the following conditions are met:

- All of the quarantine options listed above have been adequately considered and deemed unacceptable; the Principle Investigator must provide a written scientifically relevant justification for not utilizing in-house or off-site quarantine or rederivation.
- Animals have adequate health assurance data from the vendor or originating institution and the health data are accepted by the Attending Veterinarian and the DARS Director.
- The Attending Veterinarian has advised that there is no danger of cross-contamination to the rest of UC Merced's rodent population.
- A written Standard Operating Procedure for ensuring that laboratory staff do not inadvertently contaminate animals housed in the UC Merced vivarium is submitted with the exception request.

V. References:

- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th Edition (2011)