

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE**

**GUIDELINES ON THE HOUSING, HOLDING, CARE, AND
MONITORING OF ANIMALS USED FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES**

Introduction

These guidelines outline the general principles relating to the housing and care of the common laboratory animals. The UMAWC has also prescribed some particular requirements in regard to holding times and monitoring of animals in experiments.

Policy

All scientific procedures carried out on animals must comply with the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (2004).

In addition, The University of Melbourne must comply with the minimum standards established by the *Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits* (2004). These standards are enforceable and proposed variations to the standards, as part of an experimental or breeding protocol must be approved by an Animal Ethics Committee. The UMAWC also supports the recommendations made in this latter Code which ensure that practices above and beyond the minimum standards are achieved.

Guidelines

Housing

A number of general principles apply to the housing of any laboratory animal. These are that:

- each species is housed separately from others under standardised environmental conditions suitable for the particular species
- animals are maintained in compatible groups within sight or sound of others
- housing meets normal behavioural and social repertoire requirements for the species
- housing is cleaned and fresh bedding supplied at least once per week, unless protocols eg the induction of diabetes, require a higher frequency
- food and water are supplied *ad libitum* unless specifically approved by the AEC
- the length of time for which animals are housed for experimental protocols is the minimum needed to satisfy the aims of the experiment
- no animal is housed in social isolation unless approved by the AEC.

Holding

Prolonged confinement is likely to impact negatively on the welfare of an animal. The holding of animals must be for the shortest time needed to satisfy the aims of the experiment. The time nominated in the application for approval as the maximum time an animal will be held must be adhered to unless an amendment is sought and approved by the AEC.

Prolonged holding of animals represents an accumulating financial cost to departments and can create space allocation problems in animal facilities.

Care and Monitoring

Once an animal is allocated to a project, it is the responsibility of the investigator to monitor its wellbeing. Therefore, investigators must:

- maintain regular contact with the animal facility while using its services
- check animals *at least daily* (more frequent monitoring may be necessary for certain experimental protocols)
- react promptly, ie the same day, to any concern raised. Concerns may range from an animal being found in pain or distress and requiring analgesia, to an animal becoming moribund and requiring prompt euthanasia followed by a post mortem and/or tissue collection.

When there is a problem of welfare for animals, and an investigator/AEC Chairperson/Head of Department cannot be contacted, the animal facility manager may need to take action, or refer the matter to the Animal Welfare Officer. When euthanasia of the animal is required, it must be undertaken promptly and the investigator notified as soon as possible. Unless death as an endpoint has been approved by the AEC, it is not acceptable to wait until predictable death occurs.