

IACUC Guideline SC19-1: Animal Research During COVID-19 Outbreak

Purpose: The purpose of this guideline is to provide information and recommendations on how to best maintain animal welfare and research integrity during any situations related to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

Roles & Applicability. The University of Wyoming has a legal obligation to maintain OLAW/USDA animal care standards, even in the event of an emergency situation. According to the University of Wyoming IACUC Policies and Procedures Manual (2015); “All those involved with the use of laboratory animals are responsible for ensuring the health and well-being of the animals used in research and education at the University”. It is the responsibility of the research project PI to ensure that all research animals are given welfare checks daily to ensure that animals have adequate food, water, sanitary caging, and medical care without bringing undue risks to their own well-being or that of their research teams.

Background. In anticipation of UW moving to reduced campus activity, staffing, and access due to COVID-19, the Office of Research & Economic Development wants to prepare all animal researchers for potential changes to research animal care and use, as well as ongoing and planned experiments. Rational, forward-thinking preparation and action now may reduce added health concerns to research teams.

Procedures.

Investigator-Initiated Preparedness.

- Identify UW faculty, staff, and students who may be available to assist with daily animal welfare checks and cage changing procedures. Investigators must designate a minimum of 2 people in addition to themselves to carry out research-specific animal care, and **must** relay that information to IACUC@uwyo.edu and their Department Head and/or Dean. Special permissions may be needed for building access, so early identification and approval will decrease wait times.
- Standard laboratory/animal care safety practices should minimize the risk of spread within the vivarium and research community. Researchers are reminded to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), routine cleaning of work areas, appropriate use of disinfectants, thorough hand washing, minimal facial contact, and no consumption of food or drink within lab spaces.
- Widespread disease conditions may result in a high percentage of employees becoming ill, demonstrating symptoms, or being under quarantine, and being unable to work. If serious attendance issues arise, it will become necessary to triage animal care to ensure animals are provided with essential services for welfare (food, water, clean caging if critical).
- Researchers are encouraged to separate breeding pairs and temporarily suspend planned pairings beyond what is necessary to maintain research strains. Researcher teams should carefully determine if portions of their animal colonies can be reduced to maintenance levels at this time in anticipation of decreased animal care support.
- Project PIs will need to determine the status of research animals already undergoing experimentation (e.g. animals on Day 3 of a 14-day diet or intervention, animals who have already undergone surgery) and decide if those animals should continue through completion of the project. Procedures and tissue harvests that rely on large research teams may be increasing infection risks to their teams and PIs need to consider minimizing opportunities for lab personnel to infect one another. Researchers are encouraged to temporarily halt new experiments, new surgeries, and any procedures that are not essential to animal well-being. PIs who believe they have special circumstances that preclude them from halting their research should contact IACUC@uwyo.edu immediately.

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Version 01

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- Widespread infections may stress supply chains due to decreased supply and increased demand, particularly for PPE and medical supplies (analgesics, anesthetics, oxygen, etc.). This may affect other facets of animal care and research as well (animal food/bedding, liquid nitrogen, etc.). Please anticipate additional stock of these items and purchase from vendors or borrow from your department.
- Should UW Shipping & Receiving have reduced or suspended operations you may have even greater difficulty in obtaining supplies for animal care. Until the national outlook improves, please give serious consideration before purchasing or agreeing to receive any temperature- or time-sensitive products (antibodies, research animals, frozen samples, reagents, etc.). Shipping & Receiving is anticipating having their department staffed throughout any University-wide reductions, but recommends coordinating with their group (x6-2304, ext. 4) prior to ordering to minimize the risk of lost materials.

Deviations From Approved Animal Use Protocols

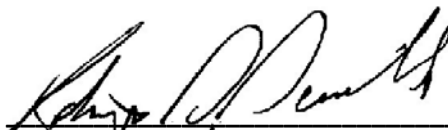
- Changes in Euthanasia Procedures – The IACUC **must** be made aware of any requested changes in euthanasia in response to this event. PIs will need to submit an [IACUC Update Form](#) **prior** to performing any techniques not approved on their protocol. **Investigators may always contact the attending veterinarian to coordinate unplanned or urgently required euthanasia, whether on protocol or not. The priority is to ensure humane treatment or euthanasia of animals under all circumstances.**
- Personnel Additions – PIs can make immediate additions to their protocol personnel *in order to perform animal welfare duties* without prior consent by the IACUC, but PIs are expected to submit the IACUC Update Form with personnel added and all new personnel must complete the required CITI certifications. **Only current UW faculty, students, and staff can serve on IACUC protocols, including basic animal care.**

Up-to-date Changes in University/ORED/IACUC Decisions


- The greatest concerns should be on the well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and our community, but we have an obligation to the research animals at UW to ensure that they are not needlessly suffering due to reduced care. In the extremely unlikely event that the epidemic becomes severe enough, it may become necessary to euthanize animals to prevent an animal welfare crisis.

History of Revisions.

SC19-01 – new guideline approved 03/13/2020

 3/13/2020

IACUC Chair

 3/13/2020

Attending IACUC Vet

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