

Policies and Procedures

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1. CAGE CARD SYSTEM

The Animal Resource Facility has developed and implemented a system to help manage specific needs within Investigators' animal colonies. This system consists of a series of colored 3x5 index cards designed to identify animals or cages of animals requiring special attention from the Attending Veterinarian, Animal Resource Facility Personnel, or Principal Investigator and their staff (Principal Investigator/staff). The colored cards are used in addition to the standard cage card and are placed in the cage card holder of the cage needing to be identified. This system is geared towards the smaller animals (rodents) but may be used, in addition to medical record documentation, for other species (rabbits and larger). Six colored cards (yellow, blue, green, lavender, dark purple and pink) each signify a specific action.

This system is as follows:

1.1. Yellow and Blue Cards

The first two cards, yellow and blue, are designed to help identify breeding cages, as well as track the date of birth and expected weaning date of the pups generated:

The yellow card is placed on breeding cages in place of the standard white cage card. This card assists ARF Personnel, Principal Investigators, and Research Personnel in identifying breeders. It is recommended to place no more than one pair (1M/1F) of breeders in a small static Microisolator cage or the Thoren ventilated racks.

The blue card is used to track birth and weaning dates for pups generated by the cage of breeders and is placed behind the yellow cage card so it is visible (if possible). The blue card is used to document all pup information and to help keep the primary cage card easier to read. Pups are normally weaned between 21 and 28 days of age.

Investigators who have breeding colonies for species other than mice and rats (gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc.) are reminded that these species are regulated by the Animal Welfare Act. Therefore, the total number of animals produced by the breeding colony must be documented for the USDA. The blue card used for these breeding colonies includes an area for tracking the total number of pups born, as well as the number of pups used experimentally. This information will be used to track animal usage on Investigators' IACUC protocols, as well as for annual USDA reporting. It is imperative that the card be completed accurately.

1.2. Green Card

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The green OBSERVATION ALERT card is used by ARF Personnel to alert the Principal Investigator and Research Personnel that a dead animal has been found in the cage. The person finding the dead animal completes the cage card to indicate the number of dead animals, the date, and number of animals remaining in the cage. The animal is removed and placed in the freezer in a container labeled with the Principal Investigator's name, Protocol number, room number, and date. The Principal Investigator and Research Personnel are notified by phone of the dead animal. The Principal Investigator/staff discards the green card once they note, for their record, any pertinent information. Any green card left on the cage for one week, will be discarded by ARF Personnel at the next cage change.

1.3. Purple Cards

The two purple cards (lavender and dark purple) may be used by the Attending Veterinarian, ARF Personnel, Principal Investigators, and/or Research Personnel to bring attention to a cage or animals requiring medical attention or treatment.

The VETERINARY ALERT CARD is the lavender card and is used to bring attention to a medical problem and document the recommended treatment. The VETERINARY ALERT side initiates the alert. A description of the problem or symptoms observed is documented on this side. When the Alert is initiated by the Principal Investigator and/or research personnel, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to notify the ARF Manager of the request for Veterinary care. In most cases, the Veterinarian and/or ARF personnel will initiate the Alert and will be responsible for notifying the Principal Investigator and/or research staff.

The reverse side, VETERINARY RESPONSE, confirms that an animal or cage has been examined by the Attending Veterinarian or designee. A recommendation of the action to be taken by the Principal Investigator/staff, as well as the timeframe for that action, is noted. In cases of pain or distress (moribund animal requiring euthanasia, severe fighting wounds requiring separation), treatment or euthanasia may need to be initiated immediately. The Principal Investigator will be notified by phone and is expected to follow through on the request within two hours of notification. If no action is taken, the Attending Veterinarian or ARF Personnel will proceed with treatment and/or euthanasia. The Principal Investigator will be charged for the technician time associated with the required action. If the Veterinarian recommends treatment, the regimen will be detailed and the Principal Investigator/staff must document treatment in the space provided. Once the animal has been treated for the specified time and requires no further treatment, the card must be returned to the ARF Manger.

The RODENT POST-PROCEDURE MONITORING CARD is dark purple and is used to document protocol-associated interventions. This card is the Animal Medical Record for

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rodents and is designed to provide documentation at the cage level where individual animal medical records are not necessary.

Documentation of interventions including, but not limited to, records of sedation and anesthesia (with or without surgery) and peri-surgical/peri-procedural care, veterinary care, and the alleviation of pain and distress during the conduct of these procedures is required. It will be used, in part, to assist the Veterinarian/staff in assessing the condition of rodents and determining whether the animal requires further medical attention (i.e., is the animal ataxic because it is waking up from anesthesia?). Both sides of this card can be used.

1.4. Pink Card

The pink card, labeled OVERCROWDING, identifies a cage of animals in which the animal density exceeds that which is allowable per Federal Regulations. This card allows for three different actions: wean, separate, and/or transfer to larger cage. The recommended weaning age for most species of rodents is 21-28 days of age. The Principal Investigator will be asked to wean, within 24 hours, any cage containing pups that have reached 28 days of age under normal circumstances. If pups are not weaned within this timeframe, the Attending Veterinarian or ARF Personnel may wean and the technician time will be billed to the Principal Investigator. Separating may be required when caging becomes overcrowded due to the presence of multiple litters or larger than normal litter size. It may also be necessary to transfer breeding groups from a small static Microisolator to a large static Microisolator should the cage become overcrowded. Most requests to wean and separate may be handled within 24 hours of notification. If animal welfare is in question, immediate action may be required.

1.5. Florescent Green Card

In rooms where breeding and weaning occur, newly weaned animals are to be identified by:

- Immediately upon weaning, an index card stating “NEWLY WEANED” is placed in the cage card holder in front of the cage card.
- ARF personnel will carefully examine these cages the next time rounds are performed in the room to ensure all animals in the cage are capable of accessing food and water
- In instances where there is a concern regarding the ability of the animals to access food and/or water, ARF personnel will resolve the situation. Common solutions may include adding food to the cage, exchanging/refilling the water bottle, adding transgel to the cage, and/or placing moist food in the bottom of the cage.
- The ‘NEWLY WEANED’ card will remain on the cage until animals are accessing food and water appropriately. ARF personnel will determine when the card is removed.