

INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC)

POLICY ON ADEQUATE VETERINARY CARE

Adapted from ACLAM Position Statement on Adequate Veterinary Care

GENERAL POLICY

The Attending Veterinarian (AV) must be appointed by the President of MGH and reports directly to the Institutional Official (IO). The AV is responsible for assuring that adequate veterinary care is provided to all vertebrate animals maintained within MGH and MGH-affiliated research facilities and may also serve as the Director of the Center for Comparative Medicine (CCM). He or she must be knowledgeable of all current and planned use of animals throughout the institution. A veterinarian, typically the AV, will serve as a member of the IACUC. No more than 3 individuals from CCM will serve as voting members of the IACUC. The AV has full authority to execute the duties inherent to assure the adequacy of veterinary care and to oversee other aspects of animal care and use to ensure that the program meets applicable standards. The AV and designees (CCM veterinary staff) must have the authority to initiate treatment immediately, if indicated.

The AV should be board certified by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM). The continuing education of all veterinarians associated with the program is an essential component of maintaining competence.

Led by the AV, all veterinarians involved in clinical care should foster and support enhancement of the program through the identification and adoption of techniques, procedures and policies that improve laboratory animal health and well-being. When possible, the veterinarian should discuss health concerns with the research contact to determine a course of action consistent with experimental goals. If the research contact is not available, or if an agreement cannot be reached, the veterinarian has full authority by the IACUC and the IO to act to protect the health and well-being of the animal or colony. All veterinarians must ensure that their professional judgements are not influenced by institutional interest to the detriment of the animals under their care.

DISEASE DETECTION AND SURVEILLANCE, PREVENTION, DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT AND RESOLUTION

Procurement and Health Assessment

All incoming animals purchased or imported into Massachusetts General Hospital must be acquired lawfully on to an approved IACUC protocol. MGH maintains strict health requirements for the animals entering the facilities to minimize the risk of pathogens that can adversely alter scientific objectives or pose a potential harm to people or other research animals. Please see the IACUC [Policy on Animal Acquisition](#).

Daily Animal Observations and Veterinary Care:

All animals must be evaluated daily for abnormalities and proper treatments or actions should be taken based on what is approved in the protocol or when unexpected research outcomes are observed. Within CCM-managed facilities, research animal specialists (RAS) are trained to identify and assess the severity of abnormal clinical signs for all of the species housed. In satellite facilities, this is done by either CCM or trained lab staff depending on whether there is a contractual agreement with CCM for full husbandry and veterinary care.

Clinical rounds that assess and review animals with open health concerns are generally performed weekly, however, the frequency may be changed at the discretion of the veterinarian. The AV is responsible for assuring that communication between animal care staff and the facility veterinarians are effective and timely. This must exist for both CCM facilities as well as satellite housing facilities.

CCM veterinarians share on-call duty to provide coverage during evening, weekend, and holiday hours throughout the year. One On-Call mobile phone is rotated between them and this number must be posted throughout all animal facilities in case of an emergency. MGH Police & Security and MGH Buildings & Grounds should also have the On-Call mobile number and should contact it for any animal or animal facility-related concerns that they observe. All staff members performing weekend care must contact the On-Call veterinarian if there are any clinical cases that need immediate assessment.

Disease Surveillance

Disease surveillance for all animal facilities must be managed by CCM VS. This includes routine monitoring of colony animals for the presence of parasitic, bacterial, and viral agents that may cause overt or inapparent disease. Any positive screening results may be confirmed by secondary method and depending on the agent appropriate containment, treatment or depopulation steps will be taken by CCM VS. Additionally, cells, tissues, fluids, and transplantable tumors that are to be used in animals must be screened by the researcher. These results are reviewed as part of the IACUC protocol review process for infectious agents that may cause disease in animals or compromise research data. Details of the testing panels, vendors for biologic screening, and other applicable information may be found on the [Animal Health & Treatment](#) page of the CCM website under Cell Lines.

Diagnostics

CCM provides diagnostic laboratory services either through internal clinical pathology resources or through outsourced services such as anatomic pathology with reputable diagnostic laboratory organizations. Laboratory diagnostic services include histopathology, microbiology, clinical pathology, serology, and parasitology as well as other routine or specialized laboratory procedures, as needed. Services can be found on the [Research Support Services](#) page of the CCM website under Clinical Pathology Laboratory. CCM Veterinarians or the CCM Clinical Pathology laboratory management is also available to help researchers identify diagnostic resources when needed.

HANDLING AND RESTRAINT; ANESTHETICS, ANALGESICS AND TRANQUILIZER DRUGS; AND METHODS OF EUTHANASIA

CCM veterinarians should be available to provide consultations regarding anesthesia, analgesia, surgery, assessment of pain/distress, and euthanasia in general and with respect to specific research procedures. Detailed policies or guidelines for these program components are provided on the IACUC website ([IACUC Policies & Guidance](#)). CCM VS has developed template procedural descriptions that are available in Insight; these procedure forms can be views on the IACUC website ([Standard Procedure Forms](#)). Available templates include examples of proper handling and restraint, appropriate peri-operative

requirements, analgesia, anesthesia, tranquilization, and euthanasia. IACUC members should utilize these procedural templates and guidelines when performing their review as well.

SURGICAL AND POSTSURGICAL CARE

CCM veterinarians who serve on the IACUC review and approve preoperative, surgical, and postoperative procedures as a part of the Full Committee (FCR) or Designated Member (DMR) review process. The AV or designee also serve in the monitoring and provision of recommendations concerning preoperative procedures, surgical techniques, the qualifications of institutional staff to perform surgery and postoperative care. The PI must confirm that personnel are adequately trained and competent to perform the procedures. In addition, the AV or designee works in consultation with Research Space Management Group and the IACUC to ensure designated surgical facilities are appropriate for the intended surgical procedures.

ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Adequate veterinary care must include responsibility for the promotion and monitoring of an animal's well-being before, during and after experimentation or testing. CCM VS oversees the environmental enrichment program that covers all animals to support both their physical and psychological well-being in terms of environmental comfort, freedom from pain and distress and appropriate social interactions, both with conspecifics and with humans. Policies and guidelines that address social housing and environmental enrichment can be found in the IACUC [Policy on Environmental Enrichment, Social Housing, and Exercise of Laboratory Animals](#).

APPROPRIATE USE OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH AND TESTING

CCM Veterinarians should advise on the design and performance of experiments using animals as related to model selection, collection and analysis of samples and data from animals, and methods and techniques proposed or in use.

RELATED CONCERNS

Other areas of professional concern and responsibility by the AV and designees include the following:

1. Participating in the development and administration of training for institutional staff in the care and use of laboratory animals.
2. Assisting institutional health officials to establish and monitor an occupational health program for all animal care workers and others who have substantial animal contact.
3. Monitoring for zoonotic diseases such as leptospirosis, toxoplasmosis, rabies, Q-fever, B-virus infection, hantavirus infection, and lymphocytic choriomeningitis.
4. Advising on and monitoring of standards of hygiene among institutional staff involved with research animal care and use.

RELATED POLICIES

[Policy on Environmental Enrichment, Social Housing, and Exercise of Laboratory Animals](#)
[Policy on Animal Acquisition](#)

REFERENCES:

AAALACi. [Position Statement: The Attending Veterinarian and Veterinary Care](#). May 2020.

American College of Laboratory Medicine. [ACLAM Position Statement on Adequate Veterinary Care](#) *Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science*. 2016, 55(6), 826-828.

National Research Council of the National Academies. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th edition](#). National Academies Press: Washington, D.C., 2011.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. [Animal Welfare Act and Regulations](#) (Animal Care Blue Book). Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 9, Chapter 1, Subchapter A, Parts 1-4. 2020.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#). Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, National Institutes of Health: Bethesda, MD, 2015.

v1.1, December 2004

v1.2, December 2005

v1.3, October 2011

v2.1, 18 September 2017

v2.2, 15 September 2021