

AREB Policy on Clinical Reporting

Department of Veterinary Service and Compliance and Animal Facilities

Reporting Contacts:

- Clinical Veterinarian (ryant7@mcmaster.ca)
- Veterinary Research Pathologist (kwiecien@mcmaster.ca)
- University Veterinarian (delaneyk@mcmaster.ca)
- Animal Ethics Officer (princd1@mcmaster.ca)
- Animal Research Compliance Officer (vandenbs@mcmaster.ca)
- Director Animal Facilities (gourlay@mcmaster.ca)
- Manager, Animal Care (corricm@mcmaster.ca)

Overview

This policy outlines the proper reporting procedures for research animals found ill, moribund, or dead. This document will use the term “mortality”, which includes both dead animals or those **humanely euthanized** by Animal Facility staff or Research Staff members, in larger than usual numbers. **Any loss of 10% or higher in an experimental group, total cohort, or group of animals must be reported** to the Office of Veterinary Services and Compliance (VSC) or the Animal Facilities (AF). Please see above for contact information. **This MUST occur the same day as the incident.**

For sick animals, please follow the Animal Facilities Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) PRO 052 Health Issues: General Overview (attached). Sick animals must be reported via an email to one or multiple people listed above (include at least 1 veterinarian). This will trigger the Animal Facility staff to enter the following information into the Treatment or Monitor log: **a description of the health issue, treatment provided, animal ID#, date of notification, Principal Investigator and Animal Use Protocol (AUP) #.**

Mortalities

Mortalities can occur because of an approved experimental procedure, in animals that have arrived recently from a vendor, from a field study, or in animals that have been in a facility for any length of time.

It is mandatory to report to contacts above high mortalities (or anything perceived as an abnormal number of deaths occurring at or around the same time) to mitigate further complications/animal losses, to identify areas for improvement in procedures where required, and for reporting purposes to the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC).

Reporting

Large numbers of mortalities can happen within a day or happen in smaller numbers over multiple days. Both occurrences should be reported (See above).

Incidents need to be reported via email, to at least one of the team members above.

It is the responsibility of both the Animal Facility staff **AND** the Research Lab members to report any incidents. Even when the cause of the mortality is known (e.g., accidentally administering a higher dose of an experimental substance to animals in a study), it must be reported.

If there is any question whether the number of dead/euthanized animals is high enough to report, please contact the team above. It is important to report any higher than usual mortalities as they are found.

VSC in coordination with the AREB Chair and AF Management will review the information to determine whether the CCAC will need to be informed via a Reportable Animal Welfare Incident (RAWI) form. The CCAC must be contacted within 14 days of the incident, including weekends.

The mortalities also need to be documented in the following locations:

- The room/lab Mortality Log
- Endpoint Monitoring forms (where applicable)
- Cage/tank cards
- Animal records (where applicable)
- Online Mortality Log (Animal Facility staff)

Mortality logs will be checked by Veterinary Staff and the Animal Research Compliance Officer to look for any patterns that may have been missed.

Room spot checks are also performed for review of documentation such as Endpoint Monitoring forms.

Revision Date: 26th July 2023
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SOP# : PRO 052
Title : Health Issues: General Overview
Revision Date: Jan. 6, 2023

Purpose: The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe the steps to take in the event of a sick or moribund animal.

- 1.0 The Veterinary Staff manages the health issues of all animals, and all final decisions regarding health issues are at their discretion.
 - 1.1 AF (Animal Facility) Technicians are responsible for identifying, correctly labeling any health issues, and reporting to the Principal Investigator (PI) staff and Veterinary Staff.
 - 1.2 All AF Health Technicians should assist other AF Technicians with health issues if the need arises.
 - 1.3 The Animal Facilities (AF) Health Technicians are responsible for maintaining the Health Log and assisting other AF Technicians or Veterinary Staff with health issues if requested.
- 2.0 Sick animals are identified by the AF Technicians via health checks and physical exams (*SOP PRO 052b Clinical Treatment Protocols in Rodents or SOP PRO 052c Clinical Treatment protocols in Rodents*)
 - 2.1 When health issues are found, an appropriate tag is applied to the cage. (*SOP PRO 490 Cage tags*). All cages that are labeled with a treatment tag are recorded in the treatment log (*SOP PRO 052a Clinical Treatment Protocols – Health Log*).
 - 2.2 The AF Technician will identify sick animals and notify the PI staff and veterinarians. If it is an emergency an AF Health Technician will be called to the room right away. All AF Technicians should be able and willing to assist in an emergency.
 - 2.3 In the event that an animal is moribund and needs to be euthanized, every reasonable attempt will be made to reach the PI. However, if this is not possible (i.e., not enough time, unable to contact via emergency contact numbers) the Veterinarian will be asked to give permission to euthanize an animal. If the Veterinarian is not available, an AF Health Technician can make this decision.
 - 2.3.1 **If any animals need to be euthanized without first talking to the PI, RFS's (Request for Services form), and their endpoint form, if available in the room, should be referred to determine if any tissues or blood need to be taken.**
 - 2.4 If this is not an emergency, the information will be recorded in the Treatment Log. Health issues should also be communicated with a veterinarian verbally or via email.