

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO
COMPARATIVE MEDICINE AND LABORATORY ANIMAL FACILITIES

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
for
ANIMAL ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

1 INTRODUCTION

The following describes a Step by Step approach to monitoring and assessing animals.

Animals will need to be monitored A) after surgery to ensure they have fully recovered, B) after administration of a toxic substance, tumors cells, or chemical/radiation to decide when euthanasia is appropriate, and C) after induced disability (eg paralysis) to ensure comfort and body functions are maintained.

2 PROCEDURE

- A Observe animal quietly without disturbing.
 - a Look for breathing patterns, location of animal (eg. isolated), and posture of animal.
 - b Look for clues in the environment such as blood, diarrhea, vomit, uneaten food or empty water bottle.
 - c Observe haircoat for piloerection (hair standing up), or lack of grooming.

- B Disturb animal and make it aware of your presence.
 - a Enter pen, open cage or lift lid to observe animal's reaction.
 - b Look for locomotion/ambulation, behavior, and eye changes (bright, or half closed, sunken etc.).
 - c Waken sleeping animals to observe their behavior.

- C Offer food treats
 - a Rodents: Fruit, seeds, nuts; dogs: commercial treats or kibble; pigs: banana, apple; chinchilla: raisins, craisins; rabbits: pineapple stix, vegetables
 - b Normal animals will respond favorable to treats.
 - c Look for appetite, behavior, ambulation, alertness.
 - d Allows a comparison to other animals in the room or cage.

- D Hold animal to perform physical exam
 - a Note extremes of behavior such as aggression or lethargy.
 - b Observe incision site for:
 - i Inflammation (redness, swelling, pus, and heat)
 - ii Dehiscence (edges separating)
 - iii Herniation (swelling)
 - iv Sutures (dangling sutures)

- c Examine uro-genital and anal area
 - i Look for fecal staining from diarrhea
 - ii Look for urine staining on abdominal fur
 - iii Look for prolapse (tissue from anal or genital opening)
 - d Examine eyes, ears, nose, mouth
 - i Look for discharges
 - ii Look for porphyrin staining
 - iii Examine mouth for malocclusion (overgrown teeth)
 - e Examine skin for dehydration (skin pinch test)
- E Weigh animal
- a Weigh animal prior to beginning project for a baseline.
 - b Weigh animal every 2nd day to follow progression.
 - c Compare weight to another growing, unused animal of same age and strain.
 - d Calculate the % change from baseline
- F Record observations in Monitoring Chart or Medical Record
- a Record date, time, observations, weight, and treatments
 - b Maintain separate record for each individual animal
 - c Ensure record is cross referenced to cage and animal.

3 SUMMARY

- A. Observe normal animals prior to beginning project to acquire sense of normal behavior, hydration, ambulation etc. This will act as a basis of comparison when assessing sick animals.
- B A sick or distressed animal must either receive appropriate medical treatment or be euthanized to relieve suffering. It is inappropriate to do nothing and wait and see.
- C Seek Veterinary advice from LAF when abnormal signs are observed.