

Guidelines for Location of Animals during Necropsies and Other Surgeries

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to define guidelines to minimize stress on animals in the presence of other animals that are either undergoing a necropsy or are subject to other painful or invasive manipulations such as surgery. As mice have a highly developed sense of olfaction and are known to secrete a variety of airborne pheromones that can communicate alarm to other mice, isolation of animals from their conspecifics during such procedures is generally considered a “best practice” in the field of laboratory animal science.

II. Guidelines for Location of Animals during Surgeries and Necropsies:

The following standards should be adhered to when performing surgeries, including necropsies on animals. For the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) Animal Research Facility (ARF), this includes mice, rats, and rabbits.

- When multiple animals are undergoing a necropsy or surgery, the animals that are not being used at the time should not be located in the vicinity of the animal undergoing the surgery/necropsy.
- The animals that are not immediately being used should be kept in their cage and may be placed under the chemical fume hood in GA146 (more than one) or under the ventilated cage rack in GA147 (if only one).
- When short intervals are involved, another option is to place the animals in the hallway. The animals must be kept in their cages. *Please Note: This applies for animal use in the ARF **only**.
- Animals that are not in immediate use within research laboratories approved for animal use by the IACUC should be placed as far away from the animal undergoing the surgery/necropsy.
- Exceptions:
 - Animals housed in ABSL-2 rooms do not have to be removed from the room when a surgery is being performed. All surgeries performed on animals must take place under the biosafety cabinet. The air that flows through a biosafety cabinet is filtered before it is either recycled within the cabinet or dispelled out of the top of the cabinet. Thus airborne pheromones are eliminated.
 - Animals do not need to be removed from the room in cases where other animals undergo surgeries that are performed under the chemical fume hood or the ventilated workstation.

Any questions should be referred to the ARF Supervisor or the Veterinarians (412-360-6107).

Reference: AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals, 2013 edition (p. 48).