

Guidelines: Identification Cards for Animal Cages

I. Purpose:

The purpose of these guidelines is to define requirements for information that must be included on cage cards, post-procedure cards, and single housing justification cards of animals that are housed in the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's (VAPHS) Animal Research Facility (ARF).

II. Introduction:

A cage card must be maintained on all animal cages. The white cage card is provided and the initial cage cards are either filled out by the ARF Staff upon the arrival of animals or filled out by investigator's staff when group housed animals are separated (weaning, study purposes, etc.). The cage card lists the precise protocol number under which the animals have been purchased. Animals may only be manipulated in accordance with the designated approved protocol.

In addition to the white cage card, a green post-procedure card must be filled out for each animal. The post-procedure cards must be used by the investigator and his/her personnel. These green cards are provided by the ARF Staff and are to be placed behind the white cage card. The post-procedure card is used to quickly inform all personnel and site inspectors as to the agents/drugs administered and the date of administration.

Social animals may need to be singly housed for a variety of reasons. The IACUC approves single housing of social animals in situations where attempts to socially house the animals could jeopardize animal welfare. A yellow card that includes information on protocols that are approved to house animals singly must be filled out and placed with the white cage card and green post-procedure card.

Please note that both the white cage cards and the green post-procedure cards are considered research data and must be kept in accordance with the VHA Records Control Schedule (RCS 10-1). The yellow single housing justification card needs only to be displayed when animals are housed alone and can be removed if the housing status changes.

III. White Cage Card Guidelines

- a. The white cage cards are used to identify the animals housed in the cage. Each cage must have one or more white cage cards. Cage cards must include the following information:

1. Principal Investigator's name
2. Protocol number

In addition to the information above, the following must be included with each cage (either listed on the cage card itself, or on separate cards):

1. Date received (may be the same as date of birth for in-house bred animals)
2. Gender
3. Strain
4. Date of birth
5. Number of animals/inventory

- b. The ARF Staff is responsible to ensure that all of the information on the cage card is completed and updated. Cage cards must be legible.
- c. When the animals are administered biological agents, the animal must be designated as biohazardous. A small biohazard sticker must be placed on the cage card after administration of the agent. ARF Staff will provide the small biohazard stickers.
- d. When the animals are administered hazardous chemical agents, the animal must be designated as a chemical hazard. A small chemical hazard sticker must be placed on the cage card after administration of the agent. ARF Staff will provide the small chemical hazard stickers. *The use of 6-hydroxydopamine (6-OHDA) does not require a chemical hazard sticker on the cage card since there are no chemical hazards present after it is administered to the animals.
- e. Please Note: When biological and/or chemical agents are administered to animals, a door sign must be posted on the entrance to the housing room. Be sure to notify ARF Staff **BEFORE** the agent(s) is/are administered, so that a door sign can be produced and provided. The investigator and his/her personnel must post the door sign indicating the appropriate hazard once the agent(s) is/are administered to the animals.

IV. Green Post-Procedure Card Guidelines

- a. The green post-procedure cards are used to quickly identify animals that have been manipulated in some manner. A post-procedure card must include the following:
 - 1. Principal Investigator's name
 - 2. Protocol number
 - 3. Contact person
 - 4. Contact information (phone number and email address)
 - 5. Surgeries or other invasive procedures, the date performed, the anesthetic used
 - 6. Recording of the analgesic/treatments administered by date
 - 7. Administration of chemical or biological agents and the date, if applicable
- b. One post-procedure card is acceptable to use if all of the animals within the cage are receiving the exact same treatment. However, if one of the animals is removed from that cage, a post-procedure card must be written for that animal and placed at the new cage site.
- c. Completion of post-procedure cards ensures that everyone observing the animal is aware of what has been administered.
- d. Clarity is crucial. Please avoid the use of abbreviations when making notes on the card. Compliance reviewers must be able to discern whether agents/drugs are being administered as per the IACUC protocol wording.

V. Yellow Single Housing Justification Cards

- a. Yellow single housing justification cards are used to identify animals that are housed singly. A yellow card must be placed on any cage in which a rodent is singly housed. The reason for the singly housed rodent must be marked for each cage that is housing one animal. The reasons listed on the card include:
 - Procedure
 - Breeder
 - Fighting
 - Other – *Note: Principal Investigator or staff must provide a brief description on the card to designate the approved reason for single housing.
- b. The yellow single housing justification cards are provided by the ARF Staff.
- c. When the single housing of social species is necessitated for experimental reasons, the Principal Investigator must have completed the information on the ACORP to provide scientific justification for singly housing any animal. In addition, the IACUC must have granted approval before the animal can be housed alone.

Contact the ARF Supervisor (412-360-6107) with any questions regarding the labeling of cages.