

POLICY NUMBER: A-006**TITLE: Policy for Transporting Rodents from the VAPHS Animal Research Facility (ARF) to IACUC-Approved Locations****1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the requirements necessary for requesting transportation of rodents. This document also includes the requirements for transportation of rodents from the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) ARF to an IACUC-approved location (on the VAPHS campus) or to an off-site location for export.

2.0 REVISION HISTORY

R&D Committee Approval Date	Revision #	Change	Reference Section(s)	Effective Date
November 19, 2019	2.2	Wording for how often to clean the transport containers	Section 5.4	November 21, 2019
September 25, 2018	2.1	None	N/A	September 28, 2018
September 12, 2017	2.1	Title of policy removed; Request documentation of approved protocol from receiving facility; MTA contact changed to Biosafety Officer	Sections 3.0 & 5.1; Section 5.1; Section 5.1	September 15, 2017
July 26, 2016	2.0	Additional details added to address the different types of animal transport	All	July 29, 2016
September 22, 2015	1.1	Title change; add clarification to purpose; add information on appropriate transport methods, containers and infection control	Title; Section 1.0; Section 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5	September 25, 2015
February 25, 2014	1.0	Policy in new format; update to current ACOS	Section 2.0; signatures	February 28, 2014
February 16, 2011	N/A	New Policy		March 9, 2011

3.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all VAPHS and Veterans Research Foundation employees (including those with without compensation [WOC] appointments) working with rodents within the VAPHS Animal Research Facility (ARF).

For information on the import and export of animals, see VAPHS IACUC Policy #A-003.

4.0 POLICY

Rodents may be transported from the VAPHS ARF to another location provided that all of the procedures outlined in Section 5.0 are followed. If the transport is on the VAPHS campus, the VAPHS IACUC must approve the location.

5.0 PROCEDURES

5.1 Transportation Request and Approval

On occasion, animals must undergo procedures that the ARF cannot support. These animals are transported to other laboratories on the VAPHS campus. To obtain approval for the transport of the animals, the Principal Investigator (PI) must list the intent to transport for additional procedures on the Animal Component of Research Protocol (ACORP) submission or on an IACUC amendment request form. The IACUC must approve the ACORP (which includes transportation locations) or amendment request before animals can be transported. The laboratories where animals are transported are evaluated during the IACUC semi-annual inspections.

To initiate the export process, the transferring PI is required to obtain the written approval of the ARF Supervisor or designee. Requests may be submitted to the ARF Supervisor/designee using the ARF email address VHAPTHARF@va.gov. Rodents will only be transferred if the animals are described in the IACUC-approved protocol/study from the receiving facility. A copy of the protocol approval letter from the receiving facility must accompany the export request or be provided to the ARF Supervisor before approval can be granted. *Note that a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) may be required depending on the circumstance. For information on obtaining an outgoing MTA, contact the Biosafety Officer for Research and refer to VAPHS R&D Policy #14.

5.2 Transportation Methods

All methods used to transport the animal must be done in a direct and timely manner. Animals shall not be transported with any other animal, substance, or device that may be expected to be injurious to their health or welfare. The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) regulations shall be followed in transporting regulated laboratory animals in intra or interstate commerce. The AWA specific enclosure standards are not applicable for hand carrying rodents in containers between buildings. The animals must not be transported through public or patient areas/corridors. Transportation of animals must also comply with applicable state and local laws and regulations

All of the enclosures used for transport must be opaque or shielded in such a way as to be non-stressful to the animals. Enclosures must be able to be sanitized or must be disposable in order to prevent the spread of pathogenic microorganism, chemicals, or radioactive materials. Care shall be exercised in handling enclosures used to transport live animals. They shall not be tossed, dropped, needlessly tilted, or stacked in a manner that may reasonably be expected to cause physical trauma or stress to the animals.

5.2.1 On Campus Transport

Since the VAPHS campus is small, all animals that are transported within the institution are carried by hand. These animals are transported in enclosures that are adequate for the species involved. A disposable primary enclosure is placed within a sealed secondary container that is available from the ARF Staff. The animals must not be transported through public or patient areas/corridors. Research personnel must be aware of proper biosecurity procedures (see Section 5.4 below).

5.2.2 Off Campus Transport

For transport off site, animals are to be transported in sealed containers that are escape proof, properly labeled, and provide adequate ventilation. The transportation within a personal vehicle must be justified, reviewed, and approved in advance by the IACUC.

The PI submitting a request to transport animals from the VAPHS ARF must ensure that the possibility of damage, misdirection and breach of security is reduced by using a reputable transport operator. Procedures must be in place to prevent theft of transportation containers.

Containers and transport vehicles must provide appropriate environmental conditions and personnel transporting the animals should have appropriate knowledge relative to animal biosecurity to maintain the animals' health status (see Section 5.4 below).

Journey times should be minimized. Alternate plans should be in place to ensure the safe transport of the animals should there be a disruption in the original plan. In addition, the PI must ensure that the receiving institution is informed about the transport of the animals and that arrangements are in place to receive the animals and remove them from the shipping containers within a timely manner.

When commercial carriers are used, they should have appropriate license(s) and should utilize animal transport vehicles that are capable of maintaining appropriate environmental conditions, which are documented. Drivers must be appropriately trained in the transport of animals and animal transport regulations. The IACUC must approve the use of non-commercial carriers (review of the company and their transport vehicles).

In case of an unexpected event, all personnel in the transport chain should be knowledgeable of the contingency plan and emergency contact information. A clear emergency plan should be available and all the relevant information (emergency contacts, animal containment, etc.) should be available the entire journey.

5.3 Temperature

Temperature extremes are to be avoided when animals are transported and special precautions or postponements are required when temperatures are below 45 degrees Fahrenheit or above 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Transportation of animals is permitted only in the passenger compartment of cars so that the extremes of temperatures can be avoided. The transportation within a personal vehicle must be justified, reviewed, and approved in advance by the IACUC.

5.4 Infection Control

Disposable transport containers provided by the ARF Staff should be used for on campus transport. The disposable transport containers must then be placed into a secondary container that has a secure lid and can be cleaned and sanitized. The secondary container can be used to transport additional animals from the ARF, however, it must remain in the designated area right outside of, and never enter, the ARF. The disposable containers shall be disposed of after use. The secondary containers must be disinfected at least weekly or as needed, by the PI or his/her staff.

Live animals can only be returned to the VAPHS ARF with prior IACUC approval. If animals are approved to be transported out of the ARF and then returned in their original cages, the caging must be cleaned and properly disinfected before the return.

For transport of animals off-site, the transport container never returns to the ARF.

5.5 Transportation of Animals Exposed to Biological or Chemical Hazards

NIH policy and AWA regulations require that the IACUC review animal study proposals for research with animals, including work with biological or chemical hazards. The transportation of animals that have been exposed to biological or chemical hazards or animals that may naturally be infected with human pathogens must be evaluated to ensure that proper containment is utilized during the transport. Proper transport may include the use of closed or filtered transport systems and appropriate biohazard or chemical hazard warning labels.

5.6 Transportation of Animals Treated with Radioactive Isotopes

An IACUC-approved protocol is required for the use of any amount of radioactive materials in animals. Special transportation requirements must be addressed in the IACUC protocol. Investigators planning to transport live animals that have been administered radioisotopes should contact the Radiation Safety Officer for guidance. Warning labels are required on enclosures used to transport live or dead animals that are exposed to radioactive hazards. The specific hazard must be identified.

//signed copy on file //

Gretchen L. Haas, PhD
Research and Development Committee Chair

//signed copy on file //

Steven H. Graham, MD, PhD
Associate Chief of Staff for Research and Development