



## CM SOP #103 – Animal Transportation

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### I. Purpose & Scope

To establish standardized procedures for the safe, humane, and biosecure transport of animals between Comparative Medicine (CM) facilities, buildings, rooms, laboratories, and off-campus destinations. These procedures are intended to minimize animal stress, prevent injury or exposure to adverse environmental conditions, and reduce the risk of contamination or pathogen spread during transport.

This SOP applies to all Comparative Medicine (CM) personnel and research staff involved in the transport of animals within or between FAU vivaria, laboratories, campuses, or external facilities, including quarantine areas.

- This SOP applies to transport conducted using:
  - Carts
  - Home cages
  - Commercial transport containers
  - CM-managed vehicles
  - Off-campus transport arrangements

All CM-managed animal transport must comply with institutional policies, biosafety requirements, and veterinary oversight.

### II. Roles & Responsibilities

#### Comparative Medicine Staff

- Adhere to procedures outlined in this SOP, including recordkeeping requirements
- Verify cage identification and transfer documentation prior to transport
- Maintain appropriate environmental conditions during transport
- Ensure animals are secured and handled safely
- Observe animals during and after transport and report concerns immediately
- Follow sanitation and biosecurity requirements
- Review health status of animals when required
- Assist with transport planning for animals requiring special handling
- Provide veterinary support if health concerns arise during transport
- Update veterinary records when applicable

#### Research Staff, Students, Visitors

- Submit transfer requests through VSATS within required timeframes
- Ensure cages are properly labeled with CM-provided transfer request cards
- Provide complete and accurate information regarding:
  - Animal health status
  - Hazard exposure
  - Special husbandry or dietary needs



- Ensure appropriate food or special diet is available at the receiving location
- Comply with transport restrictions and CM direction
- *Please note: Animals removed from a vivarium may not be returned to a specific vivarium room or housing area without veterinary and CM approval.*

#### CM Management

- Ensure transport procedures are followed as outlined in this SOP
- Ensure any staff member driving a CM vehicle has taken any required safety courses per EH&S policies
- Coordinate transport logistics, including:
  - Scheduling
  - Personnel assignments
  - Destination housing readiness
- Verify veterinary approval prior to transfer when required
- Ensure staff are trained and competent in animal transport procedures
- Maintain communication with veterinary staff during transport events
- Ensure post-transport sanitation and documentation requirements are completed
- Schedule refresher training as needed to maintain competency
- Maintain training documentation

#### CM Director and AV

- Provide oversight for animal welfare and regulatory compliance during transport
- Review and approve transfer requests involving:
  - Non-naïve animals
  - Animals with known health concerns
  - Animals with hazard exposure (e.g., ABSL-2, zoonotic risk)
  - Transfers into quarantine
- Determine special transport requirements, including:
  - Biosecurity precautions
  - Environmental controls
  - Housing or quarantine requirements
- Ensure availability of appropriate transport vehicles or alternative arrangements when required
- Provide veterinary consultation in the event of transport-related health concerns or emergencies

### III. General Notes & Definitions

- All animal transport must be completed promptly and with minimal disturbance to reduce stress.
- Favorable environmental conditions must be maintained throughout transport.
- Biosecurity measures must be implemented before, during, and after transport.
- Transport routes should minimize public exposure whenever possible.
- **Naïve animals:** Animals not previously exposed to experimental agents or hazards.
- **Non-naïve animals:** Animals exposed to experimental manipulations, infectious agents, or hazardous materials.
- **Quarantine release:** Animals transferred into quarantine may only be released following documented veterinary approval.



#### IV. Materials & Equipment

- CM Transfer Request Card
- VSATS Transfer Request Form
- Commercial transport containers or shipping crates
- Clean bedding material
- Dividers for transport containers
- Hydrogel or wetted feed
- Rubber mats or plastic pallets
- Disinfectant approved for CM use
- Zip ties and tape
- Clean cloth sheet, surgical drape, or opaque CM-provided transport cover
- Emergency contact sheet
- Mobile phone
- Vehicle maintenance log
- Per diem census sheets
- Biohazard disposal supplies (for ABSL-2 materials)

#### V. Procedure

##### A. Prior to Transfer

Research personnel must:

1. Label each cage for transfer using a CM-provided transfer request card.
2. Submit a VSATS transfer request a minimum of 48 hours for cages on the same campus or 72 hours for intercampus transfer or transfers of more than 20 cages.

The Facility Manager will:

1. Organize transport logistics
2. Assign personnel
3. Confirm destination housing availability
4. Provide necessary paperwork (per diem sheets, cage cards)
5. Animals transferred into quarantine may only be released following veterinary approval.

##### B. Packing Rodents in Commercial Transport Crates

Preparation

1. Verify cage identification matches VSATS request
2. Contact FM immediately if discrepancies are identified
3. Prepare transport crates with bedding and dividers
4. Ensure dividers are secure and properly positioned
5. Do not block ventilation openings

Loading Animals

1. Place animals only with established cage mates
2. Do not mix unfamiliar animals
3. Ensure animals can move freely within compartments
4. Secure crate lid properly
5. Use zip ties or tape as needed without obstructing airflow

Additional Requirements

1. Provide hydrogel or wetted feed for inter-campus transport
2. Label compartments clearly using permanent marker



3. Attach cage cards securely to the exterior of transport container
4. Update per diem census records to reflect population movement
5. If animals require a special diet, that diet must be available at the receiving location prior to transfer.

**C. Transporting Animals in Home Cages Between Facilities**

1. Remove or invert water bottles to prevent flooding
2. Cover cages when moving through public areas using
  - a) Clean cloth sheet
  - b) Surgical drape
  - c) CM-provided opaque bags

Important:

- d) Covers must not restrict airflow
  - e) Covers must be removed once cages are placed inside the vehicle
3. Ensure cage card holders remain secure throughout transport.

**D. Transporting Animals on a Cart**

1. Disinfect cart before and after use
2. Observe required disinfectant contact time
3. Use designated elevators and low-traffic routes, avoiding noisy areas and dining areas. If unavoidable, schedule transport as early in the day as possible to avoid the more crowded time of day.
4. Use caution when navigating uneven surfaces

**E. Transporting Animals Using a Vehicle**

Preparation Prior to Day of Transport

1. Ensure:
  - a) Emergency contact sheet is present
  - b) Vehicle maintenance log is current
  - c) Transport surfaces are sanitized
  - d) Interior sanitation is completed if required
  - e) Fuel level is adequate ( $\geq \frac{1}{4}$  tank)
  - f) Mats or pallets are available and disinfected

Day of transport driver must:

2. Carry a charged mobile phone
3. Set vehicle temperature prior to loading animals and ensure internal temperature throughout the vehicle has adequately cooled (or heated)
4. Secure cages to prevent movement
5. Operate vehicle safely
6. Use hands-free communication only when necessary

**F. Off-Campus Transport**

Additional requirements:

1. Schedule transport during morning hours when feasible
2. Avoid peak traffic and excessive heat
3. Use temperature-controlled vehicles only
4. Provide hydrogel or wetted feed
5. Line vehicle cargo space with insulating mats or pallets
6. Avoid prolonged idling

If delays occur, driver must:

7. Notify veterinary staff or FM immediately
8. Monitor animal condition when safe

If vehicle failure occurs:



9. Secure emergency roadside assistance
10. Dispatch backup driver and vehicle to pick up animals if necessary

#### **G. Upon Arrival at Destination**

Immediately:

1. Transport animals covered on a cart (see IV.D above) into the facility
2. Disinfect transport container exterior
3. Observe disinfectant contact time
4. Unpack animals promptly

#### **H. Unpacking Animals**

Within the housing room:

1. Observe animals for injury or illness
2. Report concerns immediately to veterinary staff or FM
3. Place animals into clean cages
4. Provide correct food and water
5. Confirm cage docking
6. Record cage location
7. Update destination census records

Transport containers must be:

8. Sent to dirty cage wash for sanitation
9. Disposed of as biohazard waste if contaminated
10. ABSL-2 contaminated cages must be disposed of according to biosafety procedures.

#### **I. Vehicle Follow-Up**

After transport:

1. Sanitize vehicle interior
2. Replenish fuel if needed
3. Document transport in vehicle log
4. Refer to *CM SOP 900: Care and Use of Animal Transport Vehicle(s)*

#### **J. Recordkeeping**

Required documentation includes:

1. VSATS Transfer Request Form
2. Per diem census records
3. Vehicle Care and Use Log
4. Veterinary approval documentation when applicable

These records are critical for:

5. Animal tracking
6. Biosecurity investigation
7. Regulatory compliance

## **VI. Health & Safety**

- Animals must not be exposed to:
  - Excessive heat or cold
  - Heavy rain
  - Poor ventilation
- Transport of animals with known hazard exposure must include:
  - Appropriate containment
  - Required signage
  - Biosafety precautions



- Personnel must:
  - Follow institutional biosafety and occupational health policies
  - Use appropriate PPE when handling animals
  - Report injuries, exposures, or transport incidents immediately

**VII. References & Attachments**

- *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (2011)
- Animal Welfare Act and Regulations
- FAU IACUC Policy 10.4.10 (Animal Transport)
- CM SOP 400: Cage Changing Rodents
- CM SOP 900: Care and Use of Animal Transport Vehicle(s)
- VSATS Transfer Request Form
- CM Transfer Request Card

**VIII. Revision History**

Revision Date	Revision Number	Summary of Changes
06/22/2017	2	Included insuring that food and water is available at final destination after transport
11/14/2017	3	Added covering cages in public areas
04/14/2021	4	Cleaned up the process for clarity
06/09/2022	5	Added more details for packing up shipping crates
10/12/2023	6	Added details for transport between campuses
03/24/2026	7	Updated format, made ADA compliant, refined and streamlined language, added requirement for EH&S training

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