



CM SOP #202 – Rodent Health Monitoring and Reporting

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I. Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to establish standardized procedures for the identification, reporting, evaluation, treatment, monitoring, and documentation of rodent health concerns within Comparative Medicine (CM) facilities at Florida Atlantic University (FAU).

Health monitoring is a critical component of the animal care and use program and supports:

- Animal welfare
- Regulatory compliance
- Research integrity
- Timely communication between Comparative Medicine and research personnel

All rodents housed in CM-managed facilities will be observed at least once daily from the day of arrival or birth until final disposition. This SOP applies to all CM staff and research personnel involved in animal observation, reporting, treatment, and documentation of health concerns.

II. Roles & Responsibilities

Comparative Medicine Staff

- Adhering to procedures outlined in this SOP
- Performing daily health observations of all animals
- Identifying and reporting health concerns promptly
- Initiating case documentation when a new health concern is identified
- Communicating urgent health concerns immediately to veterinary staff
- Performing treatments as directed by veterinary staff
- Documenting all activities in required records
- Monitoring animals until resolution or transfer of responsibility
- Conducting daily health checks
- Reporting concerns via phone or text as required
- Reviewing the Veterinary Room Health Log on weekends and holidays
- Completing treatments assigned by veterinary staff
- Initiating case paperwork for new health concerns

Research Staff, Students, Visitors

- Responding to communications regarding animal health concerns in a timely manner
- Determining whether animals should be treated or euthanized when appropriate
- Following veterinary recommendations regarding treatment or humane endpoints
- Maintaining protocol-specific monitoring when required
- Ensuring timely communication with CM staff regarding animal availability for evaluation or treatment



CM Management & Director

- Ensuring personnel are appropriately trained on this SOP
- Providing training to new personnel during onboarding
- Conducting periodic reevaluation of training needs and competencies, and providing retraining as needed
- Ensuring staff compliance with health monitoring and reporting procedures
- Supporting communication between CM staff and research personnel
- Ensuring initial health evaluations of new animal arrivals occur
- Ensuring husbandry staff implement procedures described in this SOP

Attending Veterinarian

- Ensuring procedures outlined in this SOP are implemented consistently
- Evaluating animals and establishing diagnoses
- Prescribing treatment, monitoring, or euthanasia as appropriate
- Providing consultation to CM staff and research personnel
- Reviewing health records and diagnostic results
- Ensuring appropriate communication of health concerns
- Ensuring resolution and closing out of clinical cases once resolved, modified, or euthanized
- *Note: The Attending Veterinarian retains final authority over animal health and welfare decisions.*

III. General Notes & Definitions

- Health monitoring is an essential component of maintaining animal welfare and supporting research quality. All animals must be observed daily, and any concerns must be communicated promptly to veterinary staff and research personnel.
- All communications regarding animal health concerns will include the Principal Investigator, even when other authorized research personnel are involved in decision-making.
- Conditions that are considered an emergency and require immediate follow-up:
 - An animal found moribund
 - Unresponsiveness
 - Active bleeding or a wound resulting in muscle exposure
 - Visible distress
 - Seizures
- **Disposition:** The final outcome of an animal, including resolution of illness, euthanasia, death, transfer, or removal from the facility.
- **Moribund:** A clinical condition in which an animal is near death or unable to remain upright, obtain food or water, or respond normally to external stimuli, indicating the need for immediate veterinary evaluation or euthanasia.
- **Humane endpoint:** A predefined clinical or behavioral criterion indicating when an animal should be euthanized or removed from a study to prevent unnecessary pain or distress, as described in the approved IACUC protocol.
- **Reverse light cycle:** A lighting schedule in which the normal day–night cycle is intentionally reversed so that animals are active during typical human working hours. During the dark phase of a reverse light cycle, red light must be used and white light must not be introduced unless specifically authorized.



- **Supportive care:** Non-specific treatments provided to stabilize or improve an animal's condition, such as fluids, nutritional supplementation, or environmental support, while underlying disease processes are evaluated or managed.
- **BAR:** bright, alert, responsive to describe an animal's demeanor

IV. Materials & Equipment

- Flashlight or penlight
- Red flashlight for reverse light cycle rooms
- Scale (optional)
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Heating pad
- Subcutaneous fluids (0.9% saline)
- Diet Gel or equivalent nutritional support
- Approved treatment supplies
- Cage flags, stickers, and forms:
 - Health Concern – Evaluation Requested Card (red, front)
 - Monitoring/On treatment Card (red, back)
 - Chronic Condition (pink): identifies an ongoing condition that does not require active treatment but should be recognized during routine observations.
 - *CM Form 004: Health Concern Progress Notes* ('Progress Notes'): The official medical record used to document diagnosis, treatments, monitoring instructions, and case resolution.
 - *CM Form 081: Veterinary Room Health Log*: A room-level tracking log used to document all active health cases.
 - *CM 051: Approved Email Templates*
 - *CM 001 Label: Vet Treatment*

V. Procedure

A. Daily Health Monitoring

Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) overseeing room husbandry must:

1. Perform daily visual inspection of all animals, observing for:
 - a) Illness, injury, or distress
 - b) Abnormal posture, behavior, or activity level
 - c) Fighting or aggression
 - d) Bleeding
 - e) Weight loss or changes in Body Condition Score (BCS)
 - f) Reproductive complications
 - g) Death
2. Use a flashlight or red light in reverse light cycle rooms to visualize animals as needed.
3. Confirm animals have access to food and water at all times unless otherwise specified in the approved protocol.
4. Complete health checks as early in the workday as possible, but no later than 9 am.



5. Follow workflow requirements outlined in *CM SOP 213: Workflow Within and Between Vivaria*.

B. Identification of a Health Concern

If a health concern is observed:

1. Place a red Health Concern – Evaluation Requested card on the cage.
2. Describe the concern on the card.
3. Start a Progress Note sheet for the case, assign a case number, and complete the top portion.
4. Place a matching case number sticker on the cage card and Progress Notes form.
5. Document the case in the Veterinary Room Health Log.
6. Notify veterinary staff via Teams channel.
7. Contact vet staff immediately via phone call or direct message (including AV) if an animal is:
 - a) unresponsive
 - b) bleeding
 - c) in visible distress
8. *Note:* on weekends, the procedure is the same, but the technician covering the room will communicate with the PI. Vet staff will be on-call for any questions or concerns.

C. Health Concern Follow-up (Vet tech)

1. Evaluate any new health concerns by 10 am.
2. Examine the animal and create a treatment plan.
3. Communicate the health concern and proposed treatment plan to the PI using the approved email templates no later than 12 noon.
4. Once approved, complete the remaining sections of the Progress Notes, fill out a Vet Treatment label for the Progress Notes, and administer the treatment. If treatment is declined, consult with the AV on alternatives.
5. Once new health concerns have been addressed, continue to review the Progress Notes forms for each room and perform and document treatments as indicated, noting any observations or changes in the condition of the animal. An entry must be made each day until the case is resolved. Any animal on treatment for more than 5 days should be evaluated by the AV.
 - a) Morning BID Treatments should be completed no later than 9 am (in coordination with the husbandry technician, if necessary).
 - b) Afternoon BID treatments should be completed no earlier than 2 pm.
6. Communicate any health updates to research personnel.
7. Notify the AV of serious or multiple cases.
8. Close cases once resolved or euthanized and transfer Progress Notes page to the room binder outside the room (if applicable).

E. Standard Supportive Treatments

Veterinary technicians may perform the following treatments when previously authorized by veterinary staff and research personnel. See *CM Guide 001: Treatment Plans for Common Rodent Health Concerns* for additional information.

Ulcerative Dermatitis (mild or moderate cases; refer to CM Guide 001 otherwise)

1. Trim rear toenails
2. Apply topical treatment once daily (0.005% sodium hypochlorite or Vetericyn)



3. +/- maropitant 1 mg/kg IP (requires PI approval)
4. Consider veterinary-directed therapy for severe cases

Dystocia: refer to decision tree for mouse dystocia available in CM Guide 001 and in each animal housing room.

Malocclusion

1. Trim upper and lower incisors
2. Evaluate weekly
3. Provide moistened food or DietGel
4. Administer fluids if dehydrated
5. If approved on the protocol, provide additional gnawing enrichment items
6. Recommend culling if a breeder

Microphthalmia or anophthalmia

1. Email PI of the condition
2. Recommend euthanasia if a breeder or if involved in behavioral research, as the animal is likely not a good experimental candidate
3. If the PI decides to keep the animal, place a Chronic Condition cage flag.

Dehydration

1. Try to determine underlying cause if unexpected for the experimental model (e.g., valve malfunction, water bottle inaccessible)
2. Provide:
 - a) Diet Gel Recovery
 - b) Subcutaneous fluids (mouse: 0.25–1.0 mL; rat: 3–7 mL)

Rectal Prolapse

1. Score the severity of the prolapse and document in the Progress Notes using the gross mucosal health (GMH) and assessment of pain/distress parameters described in *CM Guide 001: Treatment Plans for Common Rodent Health Concerns*
2. Do not initiate treatment unless approved by the AV
3. Contact the PI and recommend euthanasia within 48 hours for any animals with a GMH score of 2, pain/distress score of 2, or BCS < 2/5.
4. Request humane endpoint evaluation by the AV for any animals with a pain/distress score of 3.

Fight Wounds

1. Separate aggressor
2. Grade and record the severity of the wound
3. Provide supportive care or topical treatment as needed
4. Administer analgesia if recommended by the AV and approved by the PI

F. Communication Requirements

- A. Report all health concerns to:
 1. Principal Investigator
 2. Research personnel
 3. Veterinary staff
 4. ACT overseeing husbandry for the room
 5. Facility Manager
- B. Emails should:
 1. Include diagnosis and treatment recommendations
 2. Be sent before 12:00 PM when possible
 3. Use approved email templates
- C. Emergency situations must be reported immediately.



G. Follow-Up and Case Resolution

- If the research personnel request euthanasia:
 - CM staff will perform euthanasia free of charge by the end of the day (sooner for more severe cases)
 - Health Concern card remains until final disposition
 - Documentation must be completed
- If treatment is requested:
 - Flip over the Health Evaluation Requested red card to indicate 'On treatment' or 'Monitor' and fill out the applicable information
 - Update the Veterinary Room Health Log as needed
 - Treat or monitor as prescribed and update Progress Notes daily
 - 'Resolve' the case within the week, or request an evaluation by the AV to determine if a change in treatment is indicated.
- If the condition is chronic:
 - Place a Chronic Condition card on the cage
 - Send notification to research personnel
 - Do not record chronic conditions in Progress Notes
- If research personnel do not respond within 24 hours, veterinary staff may initiate treatment or euthanasia as necessary in consultation with the AV.
- Note: all records must be legible, dated, initialed, and completed promptly. Progress Notes remain in the room for 6 months and all records are retained by CM for at least 3 years past the end of the protocol.

VI. Health & Safety

- Personnel performing health monitoring may be exposed to:
 - Animal allergens
 - Infectious agents
 - Bites and scratches
 - Biological materials
- To reduce risk:
 - Appropriate PPE must be worn.
 - Universal precautions must be followed.
 - Hands must be washed after handling animals or specimens.
- If a bite or scratch occurs:
 - Rinse area with soap and water for 5 to 10 minutes
 - Apply pressure to control bleeding
 - Report the injury according to CM SOP 008.
 - Seek medical evaluation if necessary
- In emergencies, medical assistance must be obtained immediately.

VII. References & Attachments

- *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*
- Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals
- AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals
- *Laboratory Animal Medicine*
- CM Documents:
 - CMSOP 213: Workflow Within and Between Vivaria
 - CMSOP 204: Rodent Quarantine



- CM Form 051: Approved Email Templates
- CM Form 081: Veterinary Room Health Log
- CM Form 002: Progress Notes and Treatment Form

VIII. Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Number	Summary of Changes
01/06/2016	2	Updated regulatory references, added responsibilities, minor procedural changes
08/05/2016	3	Update health check time within workday depending on health status level
09/19/2017	4	Update including CVT, revised procedures and pictures.
05/25/2021	5	Update information, procedures and individual who is responsible for duties
07/10/2023	6	Major revision of method of identification and communication of cases to veterinary staff
07/10/2024	7	
03/31/2026	8	Updated format, made ADA compliant, changed procedure for health concern reporting, added times for tasks to be completed, added form numbers and names, expanded pre-approved treatments

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