



CM SOP #212 – Escaped Rodents

Original release date: 12/16/2016 Version: 5 Date last revised: 03/30/2026

I. Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to establish standardized procedures for the prevention, reporting, capture, evaluation, disposition, and documentation of escaped rodents within Comparative Medicine (CM) facilities.

Florida Atlantic University acquires, breeds, quarantines, and houses rodents in a manner intended to maintain the colonies' defined health status and exclude rodent diseases, including viruses and parasites that may affect animal health, animal welfare, or research outcomes.

Escaped research rodents and wild rodents pose contamination risks due to potential exposure to:

- other animals
- contaminated surfaces or environments
- support areas outside animal housing rooms
- unknown pathogens

This SOP applies to all CM staff, research staff, and other approved personnel working in or entering CM vivaria and support areas.

II. Roles & Responsibilities

Comparative Medicine Staff

- Performing only tasks for which they have been trained
- Following procedures outlined in this SOP
- Completing procedures in a timely and accurate manner
- Informing veterinary staff immediately when an escaped or found rodent is identified
- Assisting with capture, housing, identification, communication, and follow-up as directed
- Handling identified "found" animals last when required
- Documenting activities as applicable
- Checking live traps daily
- Capturing escaped rodents by hand or with a net when appropriate and safe
- Assisting with handling rodents found in live traps

Research Staff, Students, Visitors

- Using appropriate animal handling and restraint techniques to prevent escapes
- Immediately notifying CM staff if a rodent escapes or is dropped
- Assisting with identification of a found rodent when possible
- Following instructions regarding handling, isolation, testing, and disposition of claimed animals



- Paying testing costs when a research staff member drops an animal and testing is required

CM Management

- Ensuring compliance with this SOP
- Ensuring appropriate staff training and retraining
- Monitoring repeated incidents and requiring retraining when warranted
- Supporting communications with research staff and investigators
- Ensuring live trap monitoring and related documentation are completed

CM Director and AV

- Ensuring necessary resources and training are available
- Determining whether pathogen testing is required
- Determining quarantine or isolation requirements
- Determining final disposition of the animal
- Directing necropsy and sample collection when indicated
- Overseeing response to escaped rodents as part of colony health and biosecurity management

III. General Notes & Definitions

- The best approach to escaped animals is prevention.
- The greatest level of protection for rodent colonies is the animal handler. Personnel must use best animal handling practices at all times, including:
 - Never carrying more than two cages at a time in the arms
 - Using carts when moving more than two cages
 - Remaining focused during animal handling and manipulations
 - Using proper restraint techniques
 - Staying attentive to rodents in open cages, especially active strains
 - Placing a lid on a cage containing cage mates when working with one animal if needed
- Escaped rodents should be captured by hand whenever possible. Nets may also be used when appropriate.
- Dropped animals
 - Responsibility for testing costs
 - CM pays for testing if a CM staff member drops the animal
 - The PI pays for testing if a research staff member drops the animal
 - Repeated incidents
 - For personnel with repeated incidents of dropping animals, vivarium management may require retraining in animal handling and restraint.
 - If there are continued concerns over animal handling by a CM staff member, the staff member may be removed from primary animal duties.
- Depending on the situation, euthanasia and/or testing for common murine pathogens may be required.
- Stressed, escaped, or feral animals may bite. Double gloving or use of thicker gloves, such as Kevlar gloves, may help reduce bite risk.



- If an injury occurs, personnel must notify their supervisor immediately and follow the applicable workplace injury reporting SOP.
- When checking live traps, personnel must observe through the trap window before opening or handling the trap.
- **Escaped rodent:** A research rodent that is outside its intended cage, restraint device, or housing area.
- **Found rodent:** A rodent located loose in the facility or in an inappropriate area and not yet definitively matched to a specific cage or laboratory.
- **Found Mouse card:** A cage card or supplemental card used to clearly identify a rodent found loose or dropped and temporarily segregated pending claim, disposition, testing, or return.
- **Live trap:** A humane rodent trap placed in selected facility corridors or support spaces to capture escaped or wild rodents.

IV. Materials & Equipment

- Clean rodent cage
- Food and water source
- Standard cage card
- "FOUND MOUSE" card or equivalent identifier
- Gloves, including thicker gloves when needed
- Net, if needed for capture
- Live rodent traps
- Micro-isolator cage and lid
- CO2 euthanasia setup
- Health and Environment sheet
- Veterinary or health monitoring records
- Email communication system
- Approved disinfectants and sanitation supplies

V. Procedure

A. Immediate response when a rodent is found loose or escapes

1. Attempt to safely contain or capture the rodent if trained to do so.
2. Notify the veterinarian and veterinary staff immediately.
3. Record or communicate the location where the rodent was found.
4. Note any visible identification, including:
 - a) ear tag
 - b) ear notch
 - c) coat color
 - d) sex
 - e) strain characteristics
 - f) associated room or nearby cage information
5. Place the rodent in a clean cage with food and water as soon as safely possible.
6. Clearly identify the cage with:
 - a) Date/time found
 - b) location found
 - c) sex if known
 - d) PI name and protocol number if known



- e) "FOUND MOUSE" or equivalent designation
 7. Follow the pathway below based on where the rodent was found.
- B. Rodent found in a housing cage on the dirty side of cage wash**
1. Notify the veterinarian immediately.
 2. Check the rodent and any associated cage information for identification.
 3. If identification allows determination of the PI and the cage has not been opened, veterinary staff may direct CM staff to:
 - a) transfer the animal to a clean cage with food and water
 - b) contact the laboratory
 - c) determine whether the animal is needed for research or breeding
 4. If the animal is needed for research or breeding:
 - a) the veterinarian will determine whether quarantine, isolation, and/or testing are required
 - b) the animal will remain individually housed
 - c) the cage will be labeled as "FOUND MOUSE" with PI name, protocol number, and routine cage card identifiers
 - d) the cage must be handled last by both CM and research staff
 5. The veterinarian may require testing for common murine pathogens based on:
 - a) where the animal was found
 - b) likely duration of exposure
 - c) health status of the animal
 - d) length of time the animal must remain on study or in breeding
 6. If quarantine or isolation is required, the animal may return to the general population only after:
 - a) completion of the required holding period, if applicable
 - b) negative testing results, if testing is required
 - c) veterinary approval
 7. If the animal is not needed for research or breeding:
 - a) euthanize the animal
 - b) notify veterinary staff, as testing may still be requested
- C. Escaped rodent found elsewhere in the facility outside a housing room**
1. Notify the veterinarian immediately.
 2. If the animal cannot be immediately linked to a specific PI or cage:
 - a) transfer it to a clean cage with food and water
 - b) label the cage with date found, location found, and sex if known
 - c) place a "FOUND MOUSE" designation on the cage
 3. The veterinarian may require transfer to quarantine or isolation for 48 hours.
 4. CM staff will email all researchers in the relevant area informing them of the found mouse.
 5. If no one claims the mouse within 48 hours:
 - a) euthanize the animal
 - b) veterinary staff may require testing for common murine pathogens
 6. If a laboratory claims the animal and it is not needed for research or breeding, euthanize the animal.
 7. If a laboratory claims the animal and it is needed for research or breeding:
 - a) keep it individually housed



- b) label the cage as “FOUND MOUSE” with PI name, protocol number, and other routine cage card identifiers
 - c) handle the cage last by both CM and research staff
 - d) follow any quarantine, isolation, or testing requirements ordered by the veterinarian
8. If testing is required and results are negative, the animal may be returned to the general population with veterinary approval
 9. If testing is positive, final disposition is determined by the veterinarian

D. Rodent found free in an animal housing room

1. Inform the veterinarian immediately.
2. Safely capture the rodent.
3. Place the rodent in a clean cage with food and water.
4. Label the cage with:
 - a) date found
 - b) location found
 - c) sex if known
 - d) any identifying characteristics such as ear notch, ear tag, coat color, or other markings
 - e) “FOUND MOUSE” designation
5. Notify veterinary staff.
6. CM staff will send an email to all relevant research staff in that housing room or area informing them of the found mouse.
7. The veterinarian may require transfer to quarantine or isolation for 48 hours.
8. If no one claims the mouse within 48 hours, euthanize the animal
9. If a research laboratory claims the animal and it is not needed for research or breeding, euthanize the animal.
10. If a research laboratory claims the animal and it is needed for research or breeding:
 - a) keep it individually housed
 - b) label the cage as “FOUND MOUSE” with PI name, protocol number, and routine cage card identifiers
 - c) handle the cage last by both CM and research staff
 - d) complete any quarantine, isolation, or testing required by the veterinarian
11. If testing is required and results are negative, the animal may be returned to the general population with veterinary approval
12. If testing is positive, final disposition is determined by the veterinarian

E. Rodent dropped during manipulation and the animal touches the floor

This applies whether the animal is dropped by CM staff or research staff.

1. Recover the rodent safely.
2. Place the animal separately in a new clean cage with food and water.
3. Complete a cage card identifying:
 - a) date
 - b) time
 - c) person handling the animal at the time it was dropped
 - d) Place a “FOUND MOUSE” card on the cage.
4. Email the Facility Manager and Veterinarian immediately describing the event.



5. Ensure this cage is handled last by both CM and research staff.

Follow-up actions

1. The Facility Manager or Veterinarian will inform the PI by email.
2. The PI may choose one of the following:
 - a) Euthanize the animal if the animal is not needed for research or breeding
 - b) If the animal is needed for research or breeding:
 - (i) the veterinarian must evaluate the animal
 - (ii) the veterinarian may require testing for common murine pathogens depending on:
 - length of exposure
 - where the animal was dropped
 - health of the animal
 - how long it must remain on study or in breeding
 - c) If testing is required and results are negative:
 - (i) the animal may return to the general population with veterinary approval
 - d) If testing is positive:
 - (i) final disposition is determined by the veterinarian

F. Live rodent trap capture

1. Live trap interior chambers must be visually checked daily.
2. CM staff will document daily trap checks on the *CM Form 003: Daily Animal Room Check Sheet* (or other applicable room log).
3. Traps must remain in areas of high traffic and visibility so captured rodents do not go unnoticed.
4. Do not hide or conceal traps.
5. If a rodent is found in a live trap
 - a) Notify the FM or Veterinarian immediately.
 - b) Do not move or handle the trap unless directed.
 - c) The veterinarian will determine whether necropsy or testing is required.
 - d) The FM, Veterinarian, or designated trained person will euthanize and dispose of the rodent as follows:
 - (i) while wearing disposable gloves, place the entire live trap inside a mouse cage
 - (ii) seal the cage with a micro-isolator lid
 - (iii) euthanize the rodent using standard CO₂ flow rate and exposure duration
 - (iv) Perform necropsy and collect samples if directed by the veterinarian.
6. Disinfect, wash, or sanitize reusable trap materials before returning them to service.
7. Dispose of disposable contaminated materials in biohazard waste.
8. Autoclave caging as required.

G. Recordkeeping

- The following records must be completed and maintained as applicable:
 - cage card identification clearly designating found or escaped rodent status



- “FOUND MOUSE” card or equivalent supplemental identification
- email communication documenting first notice to laboratory personnel
- veterinary or health monitoring documentation supporting quarantine, isolation, testing, or return to colony
- *CM Form 003: Daily Animal Room Check Sheet* (or other applicable room log) for daily live trap checks
- necropsy and testing records when applicable
- Records should be maintained in a manner that supports follow-up, colony health decisions, and inspection review.

VI. Health & Safety

- Personnel must use proper animal handling and restraint techniques to minimize escapes and injury risk.
- Escaped or stressed rodents may bite. Double gloving or thicker gloves may be used when appropriate.
- Personnel must:
 - perform only tasks for which they have been trained
 - use caution when capturing escaped rodents
 - observe live traps through the window before opening or handling
 - wear PPE appropriate to the area and task, consistent with facility SOPs
- If a bite or scratch occurs:
 - Notify the supervisor immediately.
 - Follow the applicable workplace injury reporting SOP.
 - Obtain medical follow-up as required.
- If biohazard concerns exist, all procedures must also follow applicable biohazard and containment requirements.

VII. References & Attachments

- *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th edition, page 74
- *CM SOP 400: Rodent Cage Changing*
- IACUC SOP on Euthanasia
- Appendix 1. “A Rodent Was on the Floor. Now What?” flow chart
- FOUND MOUSE cage card template
- *CM Form 003: Animal Room Activity Log*
- Relevant rodent pathogen testing guidance

VIII. Revision History

| Revision Date | Revision Number | Summary of Changes |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
| 05/05/2020 | 2 | Revision—Testing type at discretion of veterinarian. Clarifying what to do when finding mice in various areas/conditions. Updated Appendix. |
| 05/10/2023 | 3 | Add SOP on Reporting Workplace Injuries; change from constant placement of humane traps to only deploying them when there are concerns. |
| 09/25/2023 | 4 | Specifically indicate in all sections that veterinarian/veterinary staff must be contacted and that they may request testing for common murine |



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|------------|---|---|
| | | pathogens. |
| 03/30/2026 | 5 | Updated format, made ADA compliant, streamlined |

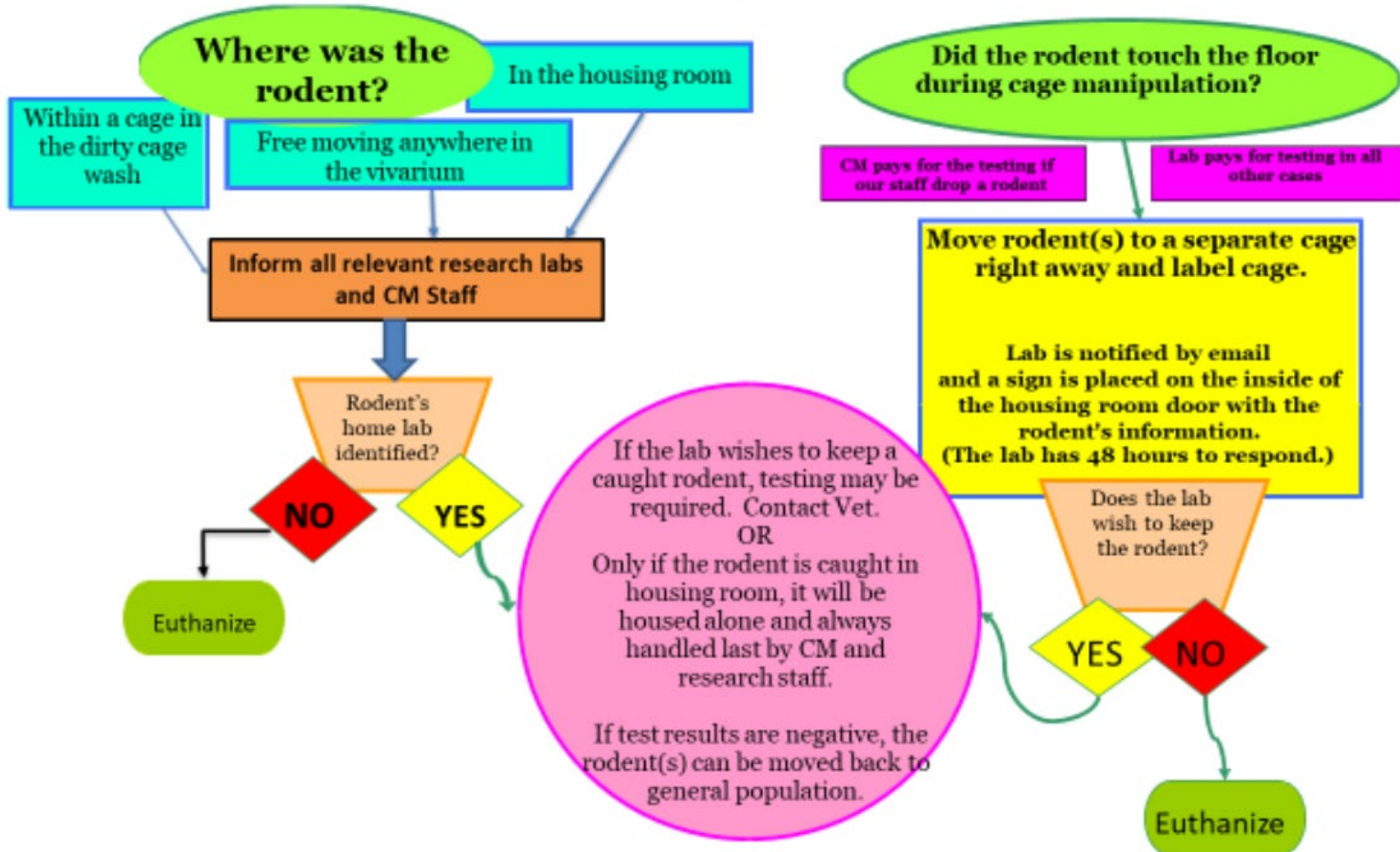
Approved by: Nicole Compo, DVM, DVSc, DAACLAM, Attending Veterinarian



Appendix I

A rodent was on the floor. Now what?

See SOP 212 for complete details.



The greatest level of protection for the colonies is you.
 Avoid creating loose rodents by attentive cage manipulation.
 Never carry more than two cages at a time in your arms - use a cart.