



CM SOP #217 – Rodent Handling Towel Care and use

Original release date: 04/24/2020 Version: 3 Date last revised: 03/01/2026

I. Purpose & Scope

This SOP establishes procedures for the distribution, collection, laundering, and sanitation of towels used within Comparative Medicine (CM) vivaria. Proper towel management helps reduce contamination risks, maintain facility cleanliness, and support biosecurity practices.

This SOP applies to all CM personnel responsible for towel management and to research personnel utilizing towels within CM-managed facilities.

II. Roles & Responsibilities

Comparative Medicine Staff

- Distribute clean towels to designated vivarium locations.
- Maintain labeled containers for clean and dirty towels.
- Collect used towels during routine room checks.
- Ensure dirty towels are removed from animal areas and laundered promptly.
- Sanitize towel bins as needed.
- Notify CM management if towels require replacement or if SOP requirements are not being followed.

Research Staff, Students, Visitors

- Place used towels in designated dirty towel bins at the end of each workday.
- Return any towels removed from the vivarium to the dirty towel bin daily.
- Notify CM staff if additional towels or new towel locations are needed.

CM Management

- Ensure appropriate training of personnel performing towel management tasks.
- Provide towels labeled “Comparative Medicine” or “Comp Med” prior to distribution.
- Ensure scent-free laundry detergent is available.
- Monitor compliance with this SOP and address non-compliance as necessary.

CM Director and AV

- Provide oversight of sanitation practices within the vivarium.
- Ensure towel management procedures support facility biosecurity and regulatory standards.
- Approve exceptions to this SOP when necessary.

III. General Notes & Definitions

- Towels used in vivarium areas may become contaminated with biological material and must be handled accordingly.
- To reduce contamination risks, towels should not remain in use longer than one business day.
- Towels must be laundered using scent-free detergent only to avoid introducing odors that could affect animals or research outcomes.
- Towels removed from the vivarium must be returned to the facility daily for proper laundering.
- Containers used for towel storage must be sanitizable and clearly labeled.



IV. Materials & Equipment

- Towels (surgical towels preferred)
- Clean towel bins (e.g., sanitized rodent cages or plastic containers)
- Dirty towel bins (e.g., sanitized rodent cages or plastic containers)
- Labels identifying bins as “Clean Towels” and “Dirty Towels”
- Scent-free laundry detergent
- Comparative Medicine washer and dryer
- Personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves

V. Procedure

A. Distribution of Clean Towels

1. CM staff will stock clean towels in designated Clean Towel Bins located in applicable rooms.
2. Containers must be clearly labeled “Clean Towels.”
3. Clean towel bins should be replaced and sanitized when empty or visibly soiled.
4. Clean towels should be stocked as needed to maintain adequate supply.

B. Collection of Used Towels

1. During daily room checks, CM staff will collect stray, wet, or used towels.
2. Used towels should be placed in the designated Dirty Towel Bin.
3. Dirty towel bins must be clearly labeled “Dirty Towels.”

C. Removal of Dirty Towels

1. Dirty towel bins should be removed when:
 2. The bin is full
 3. Towels are visibly soiled
 4. At least once daily if towels are present.
 5. Before removing a full dirty towel bin, prepare a clean replacement bin labeled “Dirty Towels.”

D. Laundering Towels

1. Dirty towels must be laundered only in Comparative Medicine washing machines and dryers.
2. Use scent-free detergent only.
3. Ensure towels are fully dried before redistribution.
4. After laundering, towels should be placed into a sanitized Clean Towel Bin.

E. Research Personnel Responsibilities

1. Used towels must be placed in the designated Dirty Towel Bin at the end of each workday.
2. Towels removed from vivarium areas must be returned to the dirty towel bin daily.
3. Researchers should notify CM staff if additional towels or new towel locations are needed.

VI. Health & Safety

- Personnel must wear gloves when handling dirty towels.
- Towels may be contaminated with biological material and must be handled accordingly.
- Hands must be washed after handling dirty towels.
- Laundry equipment must be used according to manufacturer safety instructions.
- Any chemical products used for laundering must be handled in accordance with Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

VII. References & Attachments

- *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th Edition
- FAU Environmental Health & Safety Chemical Safety Program
- Comparative Medicine Vivarium Sanitation SOPs

VIII. Revision History

Revision Date	Revision Number	Summary of Changes
---------------	-----------------	--------------------



CM SOP #217.3

Effective date: 3/1/2026

01/12/2024	2	Changed SOP title, removed labeling towels, and updated when to change bins
03/01/2026	3	Updated format, made ADA compliant

Approved by: Nicole Compo, DVM, DVSC, DAFLAM, Attending Veterinarian