

Guidelines for Humane Euthanasia of Rodents

Applications do not permit death (other than euthanasia) as the experimental endpoint in animal studies. Investigators who seek approval from IACUC to conduct an experiment that may induce morbidity must also agree to, and address the following:

1. Animals must be monitored at least once daily by personnel trained and experienced in recognizing signs of illness, injury, or abnormal behavior for at least the following:
 - a. Abnormal appearance: abnormal posture, rough coat, head tucked into abdomen, exudate around eyes and/or nose, skin lesions, abnormal breathing.
 - b. Abnormal activity: abnormal movement, decreased food or water intake, self mutilation.
2. Animals with abnormalities may be removed from group housing and housed individually to provide easy access to food and water. Laboratory personnel will be notified and must make an assessment shortly thereafter, whether to continue to use the animal in the study. If personnel directly responsible for the project cannot be contacted, veterinary services should be contacted (phone 966-2906 or 216-1235 after hours). It is good practice for the investigator to determine, in advance of an emergency, what procedures should be used to care for abnormal animals. In all instances, veterinary services should be notified that animals are showing clinical signs of disease.
3. Animals showing any of the following signs should be euthanized by approved methods:
 - a. Inability to ambulate or maintain an upright position that prevents the animal's easy access to food and/or water.
 - b. Agonal breathing and cyanosis.
 - c. Severe muscular atrophy or other signs of emaciation (Body Condition Score <2) Refer to guidelines for Maximum Tumor Bearing in Laboratory Rodents for body condition scoring p. 2
http://research.unc.edu/iacuc/sop/tumor_burden.pdf
 - d. Severe ulceration of skin or uncontrolled bleeding.
4. The frequency of observation should be increased to at least twice daily (in the early morning and late afternoon including weekends and holidays) once animals are found to be experiencing pain, distress, or increased deaths in the group.
5. Written records of all monitoring sessions, indicating the identity of the animals including the protocol number, the time of the observations, the person observing the animals, the number of animals evidencing clinically abnormal behavior or death, and what was done to alleviate any problems must be maintained and made available to the attending veterinarian or the IACUC staff on request.

(Modified from Current Issues in IACUC Protocol Review, National Welfare Education Workshop held in Raleigh, NC, in February 1994.)