March 20, 2020

Dear Animal Research Community:

It is essential that we continue to take action to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Maintaining research operations during this time presents unique challenges, but there must be no compromise in safety procedures or personal protection.

Yesterday, we reminded principal investigators to ensure that all personnel working in campus research facilities are following current social distancing and safety hygiene practices. We also asked our community to begin preparing for a potential move to a significant reduction in our campus-based research operations on short notice. Today, we are sharing important updates that address research projects involving animals.

This is a difficult time for everyone in our research community, and we would like for you to know that our entire animal care team is deeply committed to supporting you. The health, safety, and well-being of our community must be at the forefront of our decisions – including the animals in our care.

We are actively working with our researchers, state health systems and agencies, and colleagues at other academic institutions to monitor the situation. Over the past week, our nation has seen a rapid increase in new cases of COVID-19, which is translating into progressively tighter restrictions from state governments on university activities. We have also learned that personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies required for front-line and essential medical personnel are critically low in Indiana and across the nation.

Accordingly, we are issuing updated guidance for research involving animals:

- Orders to acquire new animals from vendors were suspended\(^1\) on March 16, 2020.
- Incoming shipments already in process from vendors or other institutions will still be received.
- Breeding of species/strains that are commercially available from major vendors should be significantly curtailed to limit the number of breeding cages in the animal facilities. If you are currently breeding rodents, such breeding should not result in an increase in cage numbers.
- Breeding of unique or irreplaceable species/strains that were imported, developed in your lab, or rescued from cryopreservation may be continued.
- New experiments and activities that are not time-sensitive and of longer duration should be postponed to conserve critical resources needed by medical workers and to minimize the number of compromised animals that would require attention and care if research is reduced to essential operations on short notice.

\(^1\) Exceptions will be granted for COVID-19 and other essential research, with approval from EVPRP. Exception requests should be addressed to Dr. Agnew (agnew@purdue.edu).
• Ongoing experiments using animals that have already undergone treatments and procedures may continue at this time.

We are also asking you to plan for the potential of greater restrictions on campus research operation in the days and weeks ahead. By Monday, March 23, we recommend that you:

• Develop and maintain a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that can be fully actionable on short notice (template can be found on the EVPRP COVID-19 website, under “Research Involving Animals”). Ensure that all lab members are familiar with the plan and make it available for EVPRP, PACUC, and/or CMAF staff if requested.

• Identify no more than 3 key individuals in your group that can manage essential procedures for approved active protocols, and provide daily animal husbandry and veterinary care if CMAF lacks adequate staffing to do so. List these individuals as ‘essential personnel’ in your COOP so that they will have access to campus facilities if access is limited to essential personnel only

• Identify and label the animals on your protocols that are the most critical to save in the highly unlikely event that an emergency reduction in population is necessary. The highest priority will be given to unique or irreplaceable species/strains that would end future research if lost.

As always, we appreciate your continued efforts to advance the university’s research mission. We also appreciate the strong spirit of collaboration and willingness to openly share guidance among our peers in the Big 10 Alliance and beyond in these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

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