

Required Veterinary Medical Record Keeping for Research and Teaching Animals

Purdue University Animal Care and Use Committee Policy

KEY POINTS:

- **VETERINARY MEDICAL RECORDS ARE MEANT TO PROVIDE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO ALL PERSONS INVOLVED IN AN ANIMAL'S CARE.**
- **EVERY FACILITY IS TO HAVE A SYSTEM OF VETERINARY MEDICAL RECORDS WHICH DEMONSTRATE AND DOCUMENT ADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE.**
- **VETERINARY MEDICAL CARE RECORDS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

The USDA animal care standards and information provided by the Public Health Service Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) emphasize the need for proper documentation of animal care. More specifically, the emphasis is placed on the record keeping practices for animals under treatment or observation when a variation from normal health and/or behavior exists.

OLAW also notes that if portions of the responsibilities for treatment/observation are delegated to the investigator, there must be documentation in place to ensure care is provided and the care provided conforms to standard veterinary practice. In addition, it is stressed that records of care and treatment (i.e. medical records) be maintained in a manner that is readily accessible to the attending veterinarian and animal care staff.

Animals must be monitored for possible complications from procedures, veterinary medical diagnostics and treatments.

The documentation required for an abnormal animal (one showing signs of illness, injury or other departure from normal health and well-being) includes:

1. Animal Identification
2. Pertinent history/ description of abnormality
3. Examination findings and results of diagnostic laboratory services that are performed in order to facilitate veterinary medical care that can include gross and microscopic pathology, clinical pathology, hematology, clinical chemistry, microbiology, serology and parasitology
4. Tentative/ provisional diagnosis
5. Corrective measures (diagnostic and treatment plan) being taken as the result of this variation from normal health or behavior.
6. Record of veterinary care given or directed to include assessment of the animal's condition and progress seen over the duration of the treatment/observation period, and daily treatment provided as well as dosages, routes and frequency of administration of any drugs / medications.

7. Resolution of the problem (e.g., diagnosis, treatment, return to a normal state, euthanasia)

For an abnormal animal, it is critical that daily documentation of the animal(s) condition be available for review.

For small animals or farm animals maintained in a vivarium, treatment record(s) must be maintained in a manner that allows for immediate access (e.g., in or adjacent to the room where the animals are housed). This is especially critical for animals in the post-operative period or those displaying any abnormality. Having the record in such a location accomplishes several functions.

1. It explains the condition of the animals to animal care staff.
2. It assures animal care staff, the Purdue Attending Veterinarian and visiting USDA veterinary officer that the animal care/treatment is being provided.
3. It informs animal care staff how recently the investigator or a veterinarian has seen the animals. This knowledge helps them decide whether or not there is a need to contact the investigator or the Purdue Attending Veterinarian to inform him or her of the present condition of the animal.

Once the animal(s) returns to a normal state and this is documented on the record, the medical record requires no further entries but records must be held for three years after animal disposition.

The author of all entries made on the record must be identified. If daily assessment is being performed by a lay person (animal care staff, research staff member, etc.) under the direction of a veterinarian, the record must reflect the guidance provided by the veterinarian or direct involvement of the veterinarian providing primary care concerning diagnosis, treatments or planning. It is necessary to document that veterinary oversight and authority is in place regarding the veterinary care of animals.

When the study is completed or the animal(s) euthanized or adopted the record must still be kept for 3 years. A *Death and Disposition* form must be filed with LAP when an animal is euthanized or adopted. If an animal(s) is transferred to another location or project, the appropriate records should accompany the animal(s).