



# University of Pittsburgh

*Division of Laboratory Animal Resources*

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## Acclimation Policy for Rodents and Large Animals

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### Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish a period of acclimation for rodents and large animals arriving at the University of Pittsburgh from a vendor, other institutions and campuses, or transportation using vehicles from facility to facility within the University of Pittsburgh. A 48 hour acclimation period is the required default for all animals transported to the program via vehicular transport.

Animals typically live in a uniform, familiar environment. During transport, almost every aspect of their environment changes which causes stress. (1) Stress associated with transportation affects multiple physiological systems in laboratory animals (2) and has the potential to confound research if animals are utilized before homeostasis is restored and physiological measures return to normal. *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals 8<sup>th</sup> ed. 2011* recommends that newly received animals undergo a period of acclimation to allow physiological, psychological, and nutritional stabilization before their use.(3)

To protect animal welfare and minimize the negative effect of transportation on research parameters, the University of Pittsburgh's IACUC established the following policy for the acclimation of newly arrived animals.

### I. Rodent Acclimation

- A. An acclimation period of 48 hours is required for all rodents prior to use for any survival procedures.
- B. If needed, the sex, identification, and weight of rodents can be verified on arrival.
- C. Once rodents are placed within their primary enclosure, a 48 hour period in which the rodent is not subject to manipulation and handling should be allotted to permit rodents to recover from shipment stress and adjust to their new environment.
- D. Emergency procedures and manipulations are exempt from the 48 hour acclimation requirement. That is, the rodent can be handled during an emergency box change or to address issues regarding animal health.

E. Use of rodents during the 48 hour acclimation period is allowed for IACUC approved non-survival surgeries and tissue harvest. However, investigators are advised to consider the effects that shipping stressors may have on experimental data.

## **II. Large Animal Acclimation**

A. An acclimation period of 48 hours is required for all large animals prior to use for any survival procedures.

B. Large animals are examined upon arrival and the following information may be recorded into the animal's health record:

1. Sex and identity verification
2. Baseline weights
3. Initial appearance and behavior

C. Once large animals are placed within their primary enclosure, a 48 hour period in which the animal is not subject to manipulation and handling is allotted to permit the animals to recover from shipment stress and adjust to their new environment.

D. Emergency procedures and manipulations are exempt from the 48 hour acclimation requirement. That is, the animal can be handled during necessary husbandry practices and to address any emergency that may affect their health or welfare.

E. Use of large animals during the 48 hour acclimation period is allowed for IACUC approved non-survival surgeries and tissue harvest. However, investigators are advised to consider the effects that shipping stresses may have on experimental data.

## **III. Exemptions**

A. Animals being transported for imaging purposes involving unique resources unavailable at their primary facility (as specified in an approved protocol) will be exempt from this requirement. All other requests for an exemption from the acclimation policy must be filed, reviewed and approved with the IACUC. Waiver consideration will be case by case, based on the proposed procedures which the IACUC deems can not continue and maintain the 48 hours acclimation policy.

## **IV. Conclusion**

The University of Pittsburgh's Division of Laboratory Animal Resources Veterinary Services has provided this policy to protect the health and welfare of the animals in our program and to ensure optimum research integrity. The University of Pittsburgh's Attending Veterinarian should be contacted in regard to concerns and questions about this policy:

Dr. Joseph Newsome

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## References

1. Jennifer A. Obernier and Ransom L. Baldwin, 2007. Establishing an Appropriate Period of Acclimatization Following Transportation of Laboratory Animals. ILAR Journal 47(4).
2. Guidelines for the Humane Transposition of Research Animals. NCR ILAR 2006, P.34.
3. The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. NCR ILAR 2011, P.111.