

## Policy on monitoring laboratory animal welfare

### Introduction

Utrecht University and the UMC Utrecht will arrange monitoring of the welfare of all laboratory animals for which they are responsible, in conformance with the Code of Practice on Monitoring the Welfare of Laboratory Animals (*Welzijnsbewaking van Proefdieren*, referred to hereafter in this paper as 'the Code of Practice') written by the Inspectorate for Health Protection, Commodities and Veterinary Affairs W&V (Inspectie W&V (now NVWA), 2009).

### Aim

This policy document describes how animal welfare is monitored in the facilities of the two licensees. In producing this document, the Animal Welfare Body Utrecht is complying with the obligation established in article 14.c.1.c of the Experiments on Animals Act (Wod) to establish procedures for monitoring the welfare of laboratory animals and for the minimum care established in Article 7 of the Experiments on Animals Decree.

### Scope

This policy applies to all laboratory animals within the animal facilities of the two licensees.

### Procedure

All laboratory animals (being used in an experiment, kept in stock or breeding) will be checked in conformance with the Code of Practice by a certified person. Below is the text from the Code of Practice (in italics) with additional text from the UU and UMC Utrecht:

#### Daily inspections

*Code: "All animals should be inspected daily and the findings recorded. This is a routine check for calamities, and does not require handling of the animals."*

The daily routine inspection shall be set at the level of the room, stable or other space. Although the animals do not need to be individually checked, each box, cage, stable or aquarium does. This is a routine inspection. This means that the food and water supplies for all animals must be checked to ensure they are sufficient, and that there should be a general check for any abnormalities at box level. However, it is not necessary to disturb each animal individually every day to check their condition. However, the animals must be individually examined if there is a reason to do so (e.g. blood in the cage, an odour or some other anomaly).

#### Weekly inspections

*Code: "All animals will be individually checked at least once per week, and any abnormalities recorded."*

The weekly inspection applies to all laboratory animals (in experiment, stock and breeding). At least once per week means once every 7 days. If this is not possible due to holidays/free days, illness, or another situation beyond control, 3 additional days are allowed for animals for which no particular problems or discomfort are anticipated.

The animal caretaker, animal technician, research analyst or researcher will assess the individual animal based on a general impression of behaviour, posture, gait/mobility, nutritional status, condition of care (depending on species, e.g. condition of coat, length of claws and teeth) and other obvious clinical symptoms, unusual sounds and/or odours. If the individual assessment would be an undesirable disturbance for the animal (e.g. a mouse with a litter), an assessment of the box, cage, stable or aquarium is sufficient.

### **Experiment-dependent inspection**

*Code: "The researcher can order additional inspections, depending on the nature of the experiment and the expected level of discomfort. The researcher can also indicate in the work protocol that no specific abnormalities are to be expected for a given period. For example, the work protocol can indicate that the mice should be checked and their cage cleaned twice per week. If the animals look normal and healthy, the caretaker of course only needs to make a note that nothing unusual has been found within these limits."*

The work protocol shall indicate when, how often and how these additional checkups must be performed.

### Record keeping

Once performed, the daily, weekly or experiment-dependent checkups will always be recorded. This can be (depending on the situation) in a logbook for that specific room or a welfare logbook.

If any animal is found to be experiencing discomfort, this will be recorded in a welfare log. The record must make it clear which animal is experiencing discomfort. The record must include the nature of the discomfort, estimated severity (mild, moderate or severe) and the follow-up (e.g. daily checking, treatment, isolation). This means that a welfare log is kept and maintained for all laboratory animals, at individual or cohort level. The cohort may consist of all the animals within an experiment, a breeding line, or an animal room.

Unexpected discomfort must be noted in the welfare log at the first observation, as well as follow-up care and an estimate of the severity of discomfort. Expected discomfort (as part of the breeding or research protocol) does not need to be recorded if it is indicated in the work protocol. Follow-up action and care, however, must be done according to the work protocol and must be noted in the planned procedures list or the welfare log.

### Animals kept within the Central Laboratory Animal Research Facility (GDL) or Stratenum

In the event of unexpected discomfort, depending on the observation, the following provisions come into effect: for animals in the GDL, the *KAM B.3.0001 Recording and follow-up of unexpected clinical symptoms and unexpected discomfort (Onverwacht klinische verschijnselen en onverwacht ongerief, vastlegging en opvolging)* or for animals in the Stratenum building, *Str.04.014.0002 Animals: procedure for notification, recording and follow-up of discomfort (Dieren: procedure melding, registratie en opvolging ongerief)*. In the event of discomfort requiring follow-up care, the cage of the animal(s) in question is given a "discomfort" label to indicate that the animal is experiencing discomfort. Once the discomfort has passed or follow-up care is no longer necessary, the label will be removed and the removal noted in the welfare log.

### Animals housed in the Department of Farm Animal Health

Laboratory animals housed with the Department of Farm Animal Health will be individually checked on a daily basis, following the internal guidelines for housing and care.

### Animals housed in the Equine and Companion Animals health clinics

Laboratory animals housed in these clinics will be individually checked on a daily basis.

## Fish

The aquariums of fish kept in the Biology Department will be checked daily. The fish do not need to be checked individually on a weekly basis.

## **References**

The Experiments on Animals Act (Wod) contains the following regarding welfare monitoring:

### Article 14c1 Wod

c) (the animal welfare body) shall ensure that internal procedures for checking, reporting and follow-up regarding the welfare of the animals housed in the facility are established and tested;

### Article 7 Experiments on Animals Decree

1. The breeder, supplier and user shall ensure that:

- a. all animals have housing, surroundings, food, water and care, all appropriate for their health and welfare and which at least satisfy the requirements in Annex III of the decree;

Code of Practice on Welfare Monitoring of Laboratory Animals, Inspectorate for Health Protection, Commodities and Veterinary Affairs W&V (now NVWA), 2009

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