

**Name:** Reporting Animals Needing Care      **Created:** 8/22/17  
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**Category:** Veterinary Care                    **Author(s):** T. Schoenfeld

### **1.0 Purpose**

This SOP describes the procedure for reporting and treating housed animals needing care due to illness or injury.

### **2.0 Policy**

- 2.1 Providing for the welfare of vertebrate animals housed in the FSU vivarium depends upon daily observation of their health status and prompt action if such daily checks reveal evidence of ill health.
- 2.2 Prompt action entails:
  - 2.2.1 immediate efforts to stabilize the situation and reduce or eliminate any associated animal suffering;
  - 2.2.2 immediate reporting to the relevant PI, who in turn may contact the Attending Veterinarian for consultation on treatment options, which may include euthanasia of the affected animal(s).
- 2.3 Appropriate recordkeeping follows, with entries in the pertinent holding room log and disposition log of the observed events.

### **3.0 Materials**

- 3.1 Animal room log sheets (see SOP's 150-152)
- 3.2 Disposition log sheet (see SOP 160)
- 3.3 Animal housing ID cards (cage/tank cards; see SOP 120)
  - 3.3.1 Red cards for marking cages or tanks with dead or distressed animals

### **4.0 Procedure**

- 4.1 Identify an animal as in ill health when observed to show the following:
  - 4.1.1 For rodents
    - 4.1.1.1 Notable change in species-typical behavior, such as decreased exploration or movement, decreased responsiveness to cage movement or other stimuli, hunched posture, piloerection, unusual vocalizations or mouth movements suggesting discomfort and pain
    - 4.1.1.2 Extremely thin or obese body shape, revealed by prominent or hidden vertebrae
    - 4.1.1.3 Signs of diminished or absent appetite and/or thirst, indicated by under-consumed food and/or water
    - 4.1.1.4 Bleeding or other signs of physical injury (more likely with group housed animals)

- 4.1.2 For frogs
  - 4.1.2.1 Notable change in species-typical behavior, such as decreased responsiveness to tank movement or other stimuli, splayed out posture (especially if floating on water), unusual vocalizations or mouth movements suggesting discomfort and pain
  - 4.1.2.2 Lack of interest in eating crickets or other prey
  - 4.1.2.3 Bleeding or other signs of physical injury (more likely with group housed animals)
- 4.1.3 For fish
  - 4.1.3.1 Notable change in species-typical behavior, such as opercular beats (i.e. their "breathing rate") and swimming behavior
  - 4.1.3.2 For some species, disruption of feeding behavior
- 4.2 If possible, stabilize the situation and do what you can to reduce or eliminate the source of animal distress; for example:
  - 4.2.1 separate rodents whose fighting in a group housed cage has led to the injury of a cagemate.
  - 4.2.2 assist a rodent whose limb has gotten stuck in a part of the cage.
- 4.3 Contact the PI identified on the cage/tank card as supervising the care of the animal(s) in question, to describe the situation and decide on a remedy.
  - 4.3.1 In many cases, the best course will be euthanasia.
    - 4.3.1.1 Caretaker making the report may be asked to perform euthanasia if qualified.
    - 4.3.1.2 Otherwise, the PI will make arrangements to perform euthanasia.
  - 4.3.2 Other options, in consultation with the AV, may include:
    - 4.3.2.1 Watching and waiting, to see how the situation progresses, if the animal is displaying only a low level of distress.
    - 4.3.2.2 Medical treatment, via a prescribed or recommended drug.
- 4.4 Complete recordkeeping:
  - 4.4.1 Mark the cage or tank of the affected animal(s) with a red card.
    - 4.4.1.1 Unless the sole occupant is euthanized, in which case the cage/tank card should be placed in the bag of the carcass stored in the freezer.
  - 4.4.2 Enter a comment about the situation and solution on the cage/tank card, in the holding room log, and in the disposition log.

## 5.0 References

- 5.1 Rodent veterinary care program (McGill University)  
[http://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/601-rodent\\_veterinary\\_care\\_program\\_-\\_may\\_2017.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/research/files/research/601-rodent_veterinary_care_program_-_may_2017.pdf)

**SOP REVISION HISTORY**

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300.01	12/20/17	Authored by T. Schoenfeld