

IACUC NEWS

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As you are all aware, the recent coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the research community, including here at UCSB. Here is the link to the Office of Research webpage on [Research Continuity & Planning for COVID-19](#). The goal of this newsletter is to provide a brief summary of the impact of the virus on the use of vertebrate animals for research and teaching at UCSB.

1. The Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) recently issued a memo to UCSB researchers in all fields calling for a “shutdown of all on-campus research” in an effort to minimize the potential for virus transmission. To this end, PIs have been asked to submit requests for an exception to continue conducting critical studies during the pandemic. These requests should be submitted as described in that memo. Critical studies are those whose discontinuation would generate data and sample loss that would be effectively irreplaceable (e.g., time-sensitive). Field studies are also subject to requiring an exception to continue. Please halt all non-critical studies until further notice from the VCR. Additionally, please postpone the submission of new IACUC applications.
2. You should postpone or cancel upcoming field research trips (unless they are granted an exception) as they present unique risks because of shared housing, eating meals together, potential multi-week quarantines, and challenges to “sending someone home” should they become ill during an extended trip. Be aware of travel restrictions! Even if an exception from the VCR is granted, field work must be suspended if being conducted in a locality that has declared a state of emergency. All directives from appropriate government agencies must be followed.
3. When considering your lab’s ongoing research, please determine whether a protocol modification is necessary to protect the health and well-being of your animals. This may include a change in special husbandry practices.
4. If you are using animals that are unique/irreplaceable (e.g., some genetically manipulated strains), please contact the ARC to identify these animals so that they will be a high priority to be maintained, protected, or relocated in the event of a disaster. Each animal cage card has a box/field to indicate whether the animals housed in the cage are unique/irreplaceable. Identification of these animals will be important if there is a disruption of normal ARC operations and the staff need to prioritize animal care. Cryopreservation may also be an option for PIs to consider.
5. For satellite facilities where animals are currently housed, be sure that a contingency plan is established and all protocol personnel are familiar with it. This includes designating backups and distributing contact information.
6. If you are continuing to conduct critical studies in the ARC, please coordinate schedules with the ARC staff to minimize the number of people in a room at one time. While non-critical studies are halted, please refrain from entering areas (e.g., ARC, labs) where animals are housed and/or used, unless it is absolutely necessary.
7. Due to the outbreak, supplies of disposable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as facemasks or gloves, are extremely limited. Researchers conducting critical studies should be aware of their PPE use and attempt to conserve when safe. PIs who’s labs have a surplus of PPE are encouraged to contact the campus Emergency Operations Center, who are inventorying these supplies.
8. ARC and IACUC training will be extremely limited during this time. No new researchers will be given in-person orientations or cleared for animal work. Occupational Health and Safety Evaluation forms should be sent directly to the OHS Physician. There will be further instructions on this in the email notifying you that your OHS clearance is due for renewal.
9. The IACUC has received guidance from the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare that the required Semiannual Inspections of all animal use areas may be delayed by 30 days. These inspections are usually conducted during April, so inspections will likely now be occurring in May. Depending on guidance at the time, the inspections may be conducted remotely using Zoom.
10. Similarly, AAALAC (international voluntary accreditation organization) has said that they are accepting requests to postpone upcoming site visits. UCSB has submitted such as request as we were planning on having the site visit sometime between May and July.