



Guidelines on Restricted Entry into Rodent Holding and Procedure Rooms Within LAR-Maintained Facilities

1.0 Scope and Application

These guidelines seek to ensure the humane use and welfare of laboratory animals while minimizing disruption to ongoing experiments and maintaining the University's compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Welfare Act and Regulations, the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and AAALAC International Accreditation Standards. These guidelines shall apply to all animal-holding and procedure rooms within Laboratory Animal Resources (LAR) maintained facilities and shall supersede prior or existing restricted entry guidelines. **Investigator laboratories outside of LAR-maintained facilities are specifically excluded from these guidelines, except as specified in Sections 5A-D.**

2.0 Guiding Principles

- A. Florida State University (FSU) adheres to the highest standards of animal care and maintains an Assurance with the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and is a United States Department of Agriculture registered research facility. The FSU Animal Care and Use Program has been continuously accredited by AAALAC since 2002. AAALAC requires that "the Attending Veterinarian must have access to all animals."¹ Further, in compliance with the University's Animal Welfare Assurance and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, FSU "must provide the [Attending Veterinarian] with sufficient authority, including access to all animals, and resources to manage the program of veterinary care."² Additionally, as a USDA-registered research facility, Florida State University must "assure that the attending veterinarian has appropriate authority to ensure the provision of adequate veterinary care and to oversee the adequacy of other aspects of animal care and use" for regulated species.³ The USDA Animal Welfare Regulations further require that FSU establish and maintain programs of adequate veterinary care that include "daily observation of all animals to assess their health and well-being; provided however, that daily observation of animals may be accomplished by someone other than the attending veterinarian."⁴

¹ AAALAC International. (2024). *Position Statement on The Attending Veterinarian and Veterinary Care*. Retrieved from <https://www.aaalac.org/accreditation-program/position-statements/#vetcare>

² National Research Council, "Animal Care and Use Program" in *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th edition. (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2011), 14.

³ Animal Welfare Act Regulations. 9 C.F.R, Part 2, Subpart C, §2.33(a)(2).

⁴ Animal Welfare Act Regulations. 9 C.F.R, Part 2, Subpart C, §2.33(b)(3).

- B. The FSU Attending Veterinarian has delegated responsibility for performing daily animal health observations to LAR husbandry personnel and in limited instances, to research personnel, where approved by the FSU Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC). Although husbandry tasks or daily observations may be relegated to research personnel, in accordance with the *Guide*, the attending veterinarian remains responsible for the health and well-being of all laboratory animals used at the institution and should oversee other aspects of animal care and use (e.g., husbandry, housing) to ensure Program compliance.⁵ **This broad responsibility requires that the attending veterinarian or designee have unrestricted access to animals and facilities where experimental procedures are performed or where animals are housed.**
- C. The FSU ACUC recognizes and acknowledges the unique and sensitive nature of some research that may be adversely impacted by macroenvironmental disturbances. Consequently, a Principal Investigator (PI) may request limitations on the entry of ACUC and LAR personnel into animal holding or procedure rooms.
- D. Posted limitations on entry into animal holding and procedure rooms will be observed except in case of an emergency that poses a threat to personnel safety or animal welfare as determined by the command officer in charge or Attending Veterinarian/designee. Research personnel will be notified as soon as possible after emergency entry.
- E. **Laboratory Animal Resources veterinarians and veterinary technicians must be allowed access to ill, injured, and post-operative animals to make appropriate assessments, and if warranted provide treatment or institute appropriate measures to relieve severe pain or distress, including euthanasia. Reasonable effort will be made to assess animals during unrestricted entry times. However, nothing in these guidelines will restrict LAR veterinary personnel from attending to animals requiring veterinary care, even if such animals are in rooms bearing the “Do Not Enter” signs.**
- F. Failure to comply with the guidelines below may result in inadvertent disruption to ongoing research or be investigated by the ACUC as an issue of non-compliance.
- G. Considerations not explicitly addressed in these guidelines will be reviewed and decided by the ACUC on a case-by-case basis.

3.0 Animal Holding Rooms

- A. Animal holding room means any room where animals are housed for more than twelve hours.
- B. The ACUC will accept requests for restricted entry into animal holding rooms. However, these requests a) cannot be indiscriminate; b) must be limited to specific instances where entry of personnel into the room will disrupt ongoing experimentation; and c) cannot restrict entry for six hours or more between 8 AM and 4 PM because doing so would not allow sufficient time for LAR and ACUC personnel to perform responsibilities to ensure animal health and well-being, adequacy of husbandry and housing, and overall Program compliance

⁵ National Research Council, “Animal Care and Use Program” in *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th edition. (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2011), 14.

with the *Guide*. In all cases, justification for the request must be provided in the Animal Use Protocol.

- a. Except in instances in which home-cage eating, drinking, sleep behavior, or circadian rhythm is being monitored or manipulated as part of the experimental protocol, justification for restricted entry requests should demonstrate evidence that interruptions due to an unfamiliar person entering the housing room to perform animal observations without manipulating the cage or the animals would adversely impact the data to be collected by the specific research activities described in the Animal Use Protocol. If available, a listing of peer-reviewed research directly applicable to experimental procedures included in the protocol should be provided. References may include evidence that rodents experience stress or interruptions in specific behaviors being measured.
- b. In instances where home-cage feeding, drinking, sleep behavior, or circadian rhythm is monitored or manipulated, a detailed description of the activity must be provided. This description should be included in the Animal Use Proposal, along with a request for restricted entry.
- c. An amendment (modification) to the Animal Use Protocol must be submitted if the currently approved protocol does not already contain restricted entry provisions and if restricted entry becomes necessary for ongoing or future experimental procedures. Limitations/restrictions to room entry will not be permitted unless such limitations/restrictions are reviewed and approved by the ACUC.
- d. Protocols with restricted entry periods approved before the adoption of these guidelines will be exempt from these guidelines unless a request to alter the previously approved restricted entry provisions is made or until submission of a triennial renewal provided no noncompliance or animal welfare incidents related to restricted entry provisions have been determined by the ACUC.

C. **Requests for restricted entry should allow a minimum of three hours daily (between 8 AM and 4 PM) for Laboratory LAR personnel and/or ACUC members to perform animal care and regulatory responsibilities.** If LAR is responsible for husbandry services, the permissible period of room entry may require an extension beyond three hours and will be determined in consultation with the LAR Assistant Director for Animal Care.

- a. Exceptions to the daily three-hour entry requirement may be considered on a limited basis with appropriate justification (*i.e. instances of investigator-maintained husbandry*). Exception requests must be detailed in the Animal Use Protocol and reviewed and approved by the ACUC prior to implementation. The ACUC will not approve requests that restrict entry for six hours or more between 8 AM and 4 PM because doing so would not allow sufficient time for LAR and ACUC personnel to perform oversight responsibilities to ensure animal health and well-being, adequacy of husbandry and housing, and overall Program compliance with the *Guide*. **However, the ACUC is mindful of the sensitive nature of research and will limit the entry of LAR and ACUC personnel to the fewest individuals and the shortest**

duration needed to perform the required tasks. Unless emergencies are identified, room entry will only be limited to animal observations and will not involve animal or cage manipulation.

- D. Following ACUC approval of the restricted entry request, a standardized sign must be posted on the exterior of the entry door stating the approved periods of allowable entry. Signage should be posted only after securing ACUC approval of the specific entry restrictions. The information provided must be legible. **Laboratory Animal Resources must be notified at least two business days before posting restricted entry signage to allow sufficient time for LAR to adjust staff assignments.** Notification should be emailed to larcentral@fsu.edu.
- a. Signs must be current and in place ***only*** during the specific time when the experimental needs warrant entry restrictions. Signs must identify the periods of allowable entry. Owing to the large number of requests, the ACUC cannot accommodate requests that LAR personnel telephone or notify research personnel before gaining room entry. Laboratory Animal Resources is not responsible for disruptions to ongoing research if laboratories fail to post signage or keep signage up to date.
 - b. Restricted entry signage must be taken down or turned over when restricted access is not in effect.
 - c. ACUC and LAR personnel will observe all posted light schedules and use “red light” (available in the room or LED flashlights) during dark phases to prevent light disruption.
 - d. Logs of ACUC and LAR room entry will be posted on or near the animal housing room door.
 - e. Daily observations must be made of all animals to assess health and well-being. In some cases, the ACUC may approve daily animal observation and care by research personnel. In such instances, the restricted entry sign must specify if LAR or research personnel will be responsible for providing daily animal observations and animal care.
 - i. If Research Personnel are responsible for any husbandry and/or welfare monitoring, those tasks must follow the FSU Animal Research Program standards for husbandry, and completion of the tasks must be documented on the LAR-provided laboratory room log sheet.
 - ii. Room logs **must** be completed on the day that husbandry and observations are made. All entries must be legibly initialed by the research personnel completing the activities.

- iii. Research staff must notify LAR or the FSU ACUC in a timely manner of all unexpected deaths; all injured, ill, or abnormal animals; and all facilities-related issues that have the potential to impact the animals and animal care operations.

- E. **LAR veterinary personnel are authorized by the ACUC to enter restricted entry rooms, even during periods of restricted entry, to provide veterinary medical care to ill or otherwise compromised animals.**

4.0 Animal Procedure Rooms

- A. Animal procedure room means any room where animals are held for twelve hours or less while undergoing experimental manipulation.
- B. Use of restricted entry signage on animal procedure room doors does not require justification in the Animal Use Protocol or advance approval of the ACUC, provided **each** of the following conditions are met:
 - a. Do Not Enter signs may only be used for procedure rooms while a procedure is in progress. The sign must be taken down or turned over daily at the end of the procedure.
 - b. Laboratory Animal Resources personnel must be permitted entry into procedure rooms at least once weekly (Monday – Friday) between 8 AM and 4 PM to perform rounds observations. Posted signage must identify the period for allowable entry.
 - c. **LAR veterinary personnel are authorized by the ACUC to enter restricted entry rooms, even during periods of restricted entry, to provide veterinary medical care to ill or otherwise compromised animals. Reasonable effort will be made to assess animals during unrestricted entry times.**

5.0 ACUC and Other Regulatory Inspections and Accreditation Site Visits

- A. All animal housing and procedure areas, including those outside the vivarium, are included in semi-annual inspections by the FSU Animal Care and Use Committee; unannounced inspections by the USDA-APHIS Veterinary Medical Officer; triannual visits by the AAALAC-International accreditation team; and other visits and inspections that are deemed necessary by other oversight/regulatory bodies, funding agencies, etc.
- B. The Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals requires the Animal Care and Use Committee to inspect at least once every six months all of the institution's animal facilities using the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals as a basis for evaluation. **When a semi-annual ACUC inspection is scheduled, the ACUC will notify the investigator of the proposed time and date of the inspection in advance. Within five business days of receiving the notification of the proposed inspection date and time, the investigator or research team must inform the ACUC Coordinator of any limitation on entry into animal holding and procedure rooms so that alternative arrangements for inspecting the space can be made, provided the alternative date of inspection is within seven**

months of the previous semi-annual inspection for that facility. If the investigator or research team fails to notify the ACUC of the need for alternative arrangements within five business days of receiving notification of the inspection date/time, and if alternative arrangements are not confirmed by the ACUC Coordinator, the ACUC shall assume the inspection may proceed as schedule and will attempt to perform the inspection. At that time, if the ACUC inspection team is prevented from performing the inspection, a deficiency will be reported to the ACUC.

- C. If an unannounced inspection by a USDA-APHIS Veterinary Medical Officer occurs, LAR will make every reasonable attempt to contact research personnel in advance of entry into restricted entry animal holding and/or procedure rooms. Please bear in mind that in many instances the time available for LAR to contact research personnel may be an hour or less. Federal regulations require that USDA inspectors must be allowed access to animal holding and use areas for regulated species. Refusal to allow an inspection is a serious non-compliance issue. If research personnel cannot be contacted, inspectors will be provided escorted access to the room. Caution will be taken to minimize disruptions to ongoing experiments.

- D. If a triennial AAALAC International accreditation site visit is scheduled, upon notification of the site visit date, the PI or research team member shall inform the ACUC Coordinator of any limitations on entry into animal holding and procedure rooms within five business days so that alternative arrangements for visiting the space can be made.

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