



## Curtin University Standard Operating Procedure

### HEALTH MONITORING FOR MICE AND RATS SHOWING SIGNS OF ILLNESS OR DISEASE

Number: TEC 14

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**Aims / Objectives:** To ensure that any animal identified as “At Risk” in a welfare capacity is monitored closely to minimise any suffering, undue pain, or death of the animal.

**Scope:** Monitoring score cards are to be used for any animal housed in Building 300 which is identified by either the Researcher, the Animal Carer, the Animal Facility Manager, or the Animal Welfare Officer as having an illness, disease, or undergoing any procedures that may impact the welfare of that animal.

#### **Definitions:**

**Health Score Sheets:** The Individual sheets required to be filled out for each individual animal using the scoring index as passed by the AEC for that project, or as directed by the Animal Facility Manager, for any animals showing any clinical signs of disease or illness.

#### **The Scoring Index:**

1. A Scoring Index must be developed for each application to the AEC for any procedure for any animal that may put an animal into an “At Risk” category in regards to its welfare. The Index must include:
  - Normal basic physical characteristics
  - Expected changes to physical characteristics based on procedures performed.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that the Index is available and approved by the Curtin University AEC.

2. If there has been no specific scoring system required for a project by the AEC, there is a Generic Scoring Index available to use. See Form 3.
3. The Scoring Index must be clearly visible in all rooms where affected animals are kept.



## Procedures:

1. For any animal which has been identified to be showing any clinical signs of disease or illness, or there are any concerns with the potential for any welfare concerns, the monitoring sheets must be filled out daily.
2. If an animal is identified as being unwell or “At Risk”, the cage will need to be clearly identifiable as containing a sick animal which needs to be examined daily. This can either be by a sticker on the cage or a note on the whiteboard at the entrance to the room.
3. Under each Observable:
  - Identify the description that best applies to the condition of the animal and note the relevant column number.
  - Record the appropriate score on the card/sheet against that observable
  - Ensure the following is included:
    1. Animal Details
    2. Date first observed
    3. Note the examination interval e.g. Daily/ Monthly
    4. Score the animal according to the clinical signs observed
    5. Cross out the observables which are not applicable to that animal
4. These forms are to be readily available (e.g. Form 1) and kept in a folder within the appropriate animal room.

## SCORING OUTCOMES

1. If an animal reaches a score of ‘3’ in any observable score (See Form 3 Generic Scoring Index), it is to be euthanased immediately. Ensure a record is made on the card/sheet as to the reason behind its euthanasia.
2. If an animal has a cumulative score of 2 or greater, the animal welfare officer and / or veterinarian should be contacted and a plan instigated for the care of this animal. Depending on the project and the condition, the animal may be treated or euthanased at this point.
3. If an animal has 3 consecutive exam intervals scoring a total of ‘0’, monitoring can cease and this information recorded on the sheet.
4. Where an exam interval will fall “Out of Hours” relevant staff must be notified to ensure the animals are checked.
5. Score Cards/Sheets must be kept for future reference for the researcher or facility veterinarian. This time must be compliant with the length of time deemed necessary by University Records Management.



Accompanying Forms:

1. Form 1 Health Monitoring Card
2. Form 3 Generic Scoring Index

**References:**

ANU Animal Research

[http://search.anu.edu.au/search/search.cgi?query=scoring+sheets&collection=anu\\_external&scope=researchservices.anu.edu.au](http://search.anu.edu.au/search/search.cgi?query=scoring+sheets&collection=anu_external&scope=researchservices.anu.edu.au)

Fawcett, A. ARRP Guideline 22: Guidelines for the Housing of Mice in Scientific Institutions

NSW Department of Primary Industries, Animal Welfare Branch, West Pennant Hills.  
[http://www.animalethics.org.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/249898/draft-guidelines-housing-mice.pdf](http://www.animalethics.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/249898/draft-guidelines-housing-mice.pdf)

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