POLICY

The UNMC/UNO IACUC approves several methods of individual identification for rodents. Temporary methods (i.e., pen marks on the tail or hair clipping) and permanent methods (i.e., ear punch, ear tags, tattoo, toe clip, and microchip) can be used to individually identify animals. Permanent methods of rodent identification must be described in the IACUC protocol.

Selection of the appropriate identification method depends on the age of the animals to be identified, the duration of the study, and the number of characters to be included. Some methods of identification including ear punch and toe clip can also provide tissue to be used for genotyping.

Cage cards, which must be used on all cages, must include the following information: Principal Investigator, protocol number, species, strain or stock, source of animal and pertinent dates (e.g., arrival date, birth date, etc.). Cage cards can be used as the sole method of identification for individually housed animals, breeding pairs, or on groups of animals where individual identification is not necessary.

Toe clipping is considered to be a potentially painful procedure that may affect locomotion, grasping, climbing, and/or grooming. Toe clipping, under certain circumstances, may be necessary. Toe clipping as a method of identification of small rodents, is to be used only when no other individual identification method is feasible. To ensure animal welfare, the following must be adhered to when performing toe clipping:

- Toe clipping should be done within the first 7 days of birth. No anesthesia is required if done by 7 days of age.
- Anesthesia is required for toe clipping after 7 days of age.
- Toe clipping is limited to one digit per extremity.
- Aseptic techniques, including the use of sterile instruments, must be used.
- Hemostasis: Bleeding must be controlled following the toe clip procedure. Compression of the sample site by direct pressure may be sufficient. In some cases, additional methods such as chemical cauterizing agents (i.e., styptic powder and silver nitrate), or electrocautery may be necessary.

REGULATIONS

Guide for the Care of and Use of Laboratory Animals, ILAR, NAS, Eighth Edition 2011, pg 75
Population Management.
The Public Health Service (PHS) Policy, 2002, IV.C. 1."Procedures with animals will avoid or minimize discomfort, distress and pain to the animals, consistent with sound research design”. 1b. “Procedures that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress to the animals will be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anesthesia, unless the procedure is justified for scientific reasons in writing by the investigator.”

PROCEDURE

1. IACUC Approval for Individual Identification
   1.1 Provide a written description of the individual method/s in the IACUC protocol.
   1.2 If proposing the use of the toe clip method:
       A. Provide scientific justification for the use of toe clipping versus other ID methods.
       B. Include the age of animals to be toe clipped.
       C. If performing toe clips on animals greater than 7 days of age, include anesthetic to be used.

LINKS TO RELATED FORMS, RECORD LOGS, AND SOPS

SOP on Rodent Identification Techniques