



TITLE: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Guidelines on Toe-Clipping in Small Rodents

PURPOSE: Provide guidelines for the use of toe clipping (removal of the first bone of certain toes, corresponding to a predetermined numbering code) as a means of permanent identification of small rodents.

REVIEW/REVISIONS: Permanent amendment/revisions to this policy must be presented to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) for review before implementation and should be developed by the IACUC Membership and/or University Animal Care Veterinary personnel.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 11/6/2008

PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE: Research Personnel, IACUC Membership and Staff

POLICY/PROCEDURES:

1. Due to the potential pain inflicted by this procedure, this method of identification should be used only as a last resort, after due consideration of other alternatives.
2. If no other methods of identification are feasible, the PI must state in the animal protocol that toe-clipping will be used as the method of identification. The PI must provide rigorous scientific justification as to the reasons that other, less painful means of identification in small rodents, such as ear-notching or ear tags, tattooing, use of permanent markers, etc. are not feasible.

The following are required:

- a. Because toe clipping can alter the gait or weight-bearing ability of a rodent's hind limbs, toe clipping is limited to one digit per extremity and must be performed within the first seven (7) days of birth.
 - b. Instruments used for toe clipping must be sterilized before use, and cleaned and disinfected between animals.
 - c. Topical anesthetics must be applied. Researchers should consult with UAC veterinarians prior to toe clipping for advice on appropriate topical anesthetics.
3. All previously approved protocols must provide scientific justification for continuing to use toe-clipping as a method of identification by June 1, 2009.

JUSTIFICATION:

The section on Identification and Records in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animal*, lists the following means of animal identification to include "room, rack, pen, stall, and cage cards with written or bar-coded information; collars, bands, plates, and tabs; colored stains; ear notches and tags; tattoos; subcutaneous transponders; and freeze brands. Toe-clipping, as a method of identification of small rodents, should be used only when no other individual identification method is feasible and should be performed only on altricial neonates."

Under certain circumstances the technique of "toe clipping" for the purposes of animal identification may be necessary. Legal, regulatory, and moral guidelines require that animal pain, distress, and suffering be minimized in any experiment. The IACUC considers toe-clipping a potentially painful procedure and has developed this policy to ensure that it will be used only as a last resort, after due consideration of other alternatives, and with sufficient scientific justification that no other identification method is feasible.