

**University of Southern California**  
***Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee***  
**Holding Protocol Policy**

**A. Background**

To clarify the purpose of the Holding Protocol, circumstances when animals are placed on the Holding Protocol, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals caring for animals placed on hold.

**B. Definitions**

Animal Care Staff – DAR employed staff that provide or supervise animal husbandry care

AOPS – Animal Operations software utilized by DAR for business operations

IACUC Staff – IACUC employed staff that provide protocol support

PI – Principal Investigator

Veterinary Staff – DAR employed veterinarian, registered veterinary technician, or animal health technician that provide veterinary care

**C. Applicability**

Animals housed at USC for teaching or research purposes must be covered by an IACUC approved protocol in accordance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and the USDA Animal Welfare Regulations. Principal Investigators are expected to keep and maintain IACUC approval of their protocol(s) for the duration they have animals housed at USC.

Situations may arise in which animals are not covered by an IACUC approved protocol. To avoid euthanasia of such animals and maintain compliance with regulations, the IACUC allows the temporary transfer of animals to the Holding Protocol under the Executive Director of the Department of Animal Resources until such time as the original PI has their own approved protocol.

Circumstances when animals may be transferred to the Holding Protocol include but are not limited to:

- Animals from an expired protocol.
- Animals from a protocol that has been suspended as part of a noncompliance.

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- Animals from new investigators that do not yet have an IACUC approved protocol, but need immediate transfer of animals to USC.
- Animals delivered without an IACUC approved protocol in place.

## D. Policy

The Holding Protocol is only intended for the continued care of animals. Research activities and experimental manipulations are not permitted with the animals on hold. Neither the PI nor their laboratory personnel are allowed to handle, euthanize, place stickers on cages, or manipulate the animals in any way, when housed on the Holding Protocol. This includes contacting DAR staff for carcasses of animals for further research.

Maintenance breeding of specific, irreplaceable animal lines may occur with permission from the DAR Executive Director after evidence is provided. Breeding for colony expansion is not authorized on the Holding Protocol.

### 1. Transfer Process

#### a. Internal Transfer

The IACUC staff will initiate the transfer of USC animals onto the Holding Protocol through AOPS.

#### b. External Transfer

DAR staff will initiate the transfer of animals arriving to USC without an existing approved protocol or excess animals produced from breeding onto the Holding Protocol through AOPS.

#### c. Account Required

The PI must provide a WorkTag not associated with external funding for the purposes of billing *per diem* charges. Any additional husbandry and veterinary time required to support the colony during the time on hold (eg: breeding maintenance) or other animal related requests that exceed DAR's normal care will also be billed. The new WorkTag must be provided to the DAR office [daradm@med.usc.edu](mailto:daradm@med.usc.edu) (2-1689) or IACUC office [iacuc@usc.edu](mailto:iacuc@usc.edu) (2-0600).

#### d. Cage Labeling

Animals transferred or received onto the Holding Protocol will be labeled with a cage card clearly indicating that the animals are on hold, are under the care

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of DAR, and may not be handled by laboratory staff. The time it takes DAR staff to label cages will also be billed to the account # provided in c.

All questions pertaining to why animals were placed on hold must be directed to the IACUC office at [iacuc@usc.edu](mailto:iacuc@usc.edu) (2-0600).

## 2. Management of Animals

### a. Husbandry Care

The same standard of husbandry care is provided to animals on holding as any animal housed at USC. Animals will be maintained in a clean, healthy, and safe environment when under DAR care.

If maintenance breeding is authorized, the animal care staff must continue to support the colony by weaning litters at appropriate ages into compatible same-sex configurations. DAR staff is not to setup new breeding pairs.

If breeding is not authorized while on hold, animal care staff are authorized to separate the males out of breeding cages after consulting the Holding Protocol Decision Tree for Separating Breeders (see Appendix).

If the PI has certain requirements for care (such as special diet required for the health and maintenance of the animals), they must inform DAR by email of these requirements within the first week of holding and they must be within the scope of the Holding Protocol. Identification of animals, genotyping, or any other experimental manipulation are prohibited at this time and throughout the entirety of holding.

### b. Veterinary Care

Animals exhibiting clinical signs of disease will be treated at the discretion of the veterinary staff using the same standards of care as animals housed on an active and IACUC approved protocol. Veterinary staff are authorized to initiate treatment immediately. They are further authorized to euthanize animals on hold that are exhibiting signs of disease that would ordinarily be recommended for euthanasia by the PI when not on hold. If extraordinary measures are being considered to preserve life or alleviate pain (eg: surgical intervention), the veterinary staff will make a reasonable effort to communicate with the PI prior to initiating treatment.

### c. Records

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DAR staff must keep adequate records while animals are on hold so that the original PI can track their animals and resume research activities once off holding. Records include marking cage cards with the dates and numbers of animals born, separated/weaned, euthanized, or found dead. If animals are separated/weaned, the originating cage card should indicate the new animal location(s). Similarly, newly separated animal cage cards should also indicate the originating cage location.

The veterinary and animal care staff are not required to, but may, send emails to the PI and study contact notifying them of sick, dead, or euthanized animals as a courtesy for lab recordkeeping. This communication does not prompt the lab to any action or provide permission to act; it is for notification purposes only.

## **d. Responsibility**

If any injuries or deaths occur that are not spontaneous or related to the colony itself (previous manipulations, genetics, etc.) and are from DAR staff error, this will be reported to the PI and IACUC in the spirit of transparency.

Animals will be transferred back to the PI as soon as an IACUC approved protocol is available. After animals are transferred off the Holding Protocol, the PI and the lab are fully responsible for the animals and the data they obtain and must not hold DAR liable if the data does not appear the way it did before the animals were placed on hold.

## **3. One-Time Colony Maintenance during IACUC Mandated Protocol Suspensions**

After the IACUC votes for a protocol to be suspended or animals placed on the Holding Protocol, the IACUC may authorize a one-time colony maintenance for the lab under the supervision of a DAR veterinary or animal care staff member. The lab will be charged for this time.

Colony maintenance is defined as combining or separating breeding pairs, euthanizing surplus animals or designating these animals for euthanasia with pink euthanasia stickers, and separating out weaned littermates by sex into their own cages. No new pairs should be set up at this time. Tissue may be collected from carcasses at this time only.

At this time, the PI or designated lab contact should assign a number or letter to each cage to streamline record keeping for DAR staff when animals are being weaned. Breeding should only be maintained for essential lines that cannot be replaced and are not commercially available.

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If the PI has certain requirements for care, they must inform DAR by email of these requirements within the first week of suspension and they must be within the scope of the Holding Protocol. Identification of animals, genotyping, or any other experimental manipulation are prohibited at this time and throughout the entirety of the suspension or holding.

## E. References

Public Health Service. Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/phspol.htm>

Animal Welfare Act and Regulations

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/animal-welfare-act>

NIH Cost Analysis and Rate Setting Manual

[https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/air/rate\\_setting\\_manual\\_2000.pdf](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/air/rate_setting_manual_2000.pdf)

## F. Appendix (see next page)

## Holding Protocol Decision Tree for Separating Breeders

