



26 March 2020

## **ICLAS news and upcoming opportunities and events from our members**

The ICLAS General Assembly for 2020 has been postponed, due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The General Assembly was to have taken place just prior to the congress of the Asian Federation for Laboratory Animal Science (AFLAS), in June in Thailand. More information will be forthcoming about a date when the assembly will be rescheduled. The AFLAS congress has been postponed until June of 2021, with information [here](#).

During this Coronavirus pandemic, we are sharing some recommendations to assist with providing care for laboratory animals in the event that animal care staff numbers are reduced. This list of actions to consider is compiled from suggestions made by several research oversight agencies and disaster plans posted by research facilities.

1. Prepare for decreased numbers of workers able to provide husbandry and veterinary care
  - Stagger or alternate work hours or days to minimize chance for animal care workers to be exposed to virus infection from co-workers
  - Cross-train animal care workers to be able to work with additional species or in other aspects of animal care, use of equipment, facility operations, and administering treatments to animals
  - Train experienced research staff and scientists in animal husbandry tasks, maintain updated contact information
  
2. Minimize animal numbers by
  - Decreasing breeding animal production to the minimum needed to maintain each line of animals
  - Not beginning new projects, not taking in additional animals
  - Postponing studies that have need for special animal care requirements, particularly involving hazard use or special knowledge of care or equipment
  
3. Review emergency staffing plans and update contact information with animal care and veterinary team members
  - All team members should be clear on
    - Methods of communication about work hours, animal care concerns, calling in sick
    - Policies on sick leave, when to stay home
  - Have plans for communication with research staff and scientists, update contact lists

4. Assure access to the facility for animal care staff
  - Provide official letters and identification permitting travel to work if the region is subject to orders to remain at home
  - Have notices at the facility entrances regarding who may enter
5. Procure adequate supplies (one-month supply on hand)
  - Food/water/bedding
  - Cleaning agents, disinfectants
  - Personal protective equipment for working safely with the species housed
  - Medicines, veterinary supplies
6. Continue ethical oversight of research animal care and use
  - Oversight committees may continue to meet via video-conference or other real-time electronic communication methods
  - Decisions to make changes in care or husbandry or to decrease animal populations should be made in concert with ethics oversight bodies and scientists, as part of a facility disaster plan
7. If staffing levels drop to a level impacting adequate animal care, have in place specific plans for
  - Decreasing cage change or cleaning frequency or spot-cleaning cages
  - Providing extra food/water
  - Decreasing frequency of observation of animals
8. If adequate animal care becomes impossible
  - Have identified in advance animals that should be preferentially preserved
    - Rare breeding stock or animals of specific genetic lines
    - Animals well into long-term studies
  - Have plans for euthanasia if animals cannot be humanely cared for
    - Staff trained to perform euthanasia
    - Adequate means for euthanasia
    - Storage area for euthanized animals

### **EARA Requests Assistance to Assess the Current COVID-19 Disruption to Animal Research Efforts in Europe**

The European Animal Research Association (EARA) is in conversation with the EU, and national governments, on how the current restrictions and disruptions due to COVID-19 are affecting the biomedical sector and its research into the virus and other key research areas. In particular, we are trying to get a better understanding of the specific problems that the biomedical sector is facing. It would therefore be extremely helpful if EARA member organisations could give detailed information on the following areas of concern:

1. Problems transporting (sending and receiving) research animals.
2. Problems receiving essential materials to keep facilities open (feed, cages etc).
3. Problems maintaining sufficient numbers of key workers in place (researchers, animal technicians etc).

4. Animal welfare concerns linked to any of the points above.
5. Areas of research that will not be able to continue without urgent financial assistance.

Please reply directly to EARA executive director.

To all ICLAS members, we wish good health and resilience during this trying time.

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