



Curtin University Standard Operating Procedure

RODENT HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAMME

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Aim/Purpose: A rodent health surveillance programme shall be instituted in order to detect disease and to treat/eradicate the disease. Prompt detection of disease (often sub-clinical) is important for both animal welfare and to ensure reproducibility and accuracy of scientific data.

Procedure:

1. Surveillance of rodent colonies maintained under barrier conditions shall be performed at regular intervals as determined in consultation with the laboratory veterinarian. The veterinarian will take into consideration strain of animal, risk factors, experimental procedures, housing etc in determining this frequency.
2. The list of pathogens to be screened for should be determined in consultation with the veterinarian on a case by case basis. Screening will generally involve serological and histopathological analysis of tissues samples. For reference see FELASA working party report on health monitoring of rodent and rabbit colonies 2001 (available at www.lal.org.uk).
3. Extra animals (sentinels) may need to be purchased specifically for health screening. These animals should be immunocompetent and it is usual to use an inbred or outbred strain. In the case of transgenic animals it is possible to use wild type litter mates as sentinels. The number of animals to be used to achieve a statistically relevant screen is normally taken to be eight in conventional open top cages. Advice should be taken from the laboratory veterinarian as to the number to be used.
4. Tissue samples should be sent to a diagnostic laboratory specialised in laboratory animal diagnostics e.g. IMVS in Adelaide.
5. The cost of screening will be at the expense of the investigator.
6. A copy of all screening results should be passed on to the facility manager and laboratory veterinarian. Any positive results should be discussed to determine relevance and if any action should be taken.
7. Consideration should also be given to screening any biological materials (whether of human or animal origin) that are intended to be inoculated into animals.



Examples of materials that may transmit disease include transplantable tumours, embryonic stem cells, hybridomas, blood products and tissue homogenates.

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