



Guidelines for the Acclimation of Animals Utilized in Research Following Transportation

The expectation is that IACUC Guidelines will be followed as best practice. They allow the Animal Care & Use Program to attain acceptable performance outcomes to meet the intent of the regulations. As such, any planned variation from the guidelines requires prior IACUC approval and must be based on a scientific rationale.

Stress associated with transportation has widespread effects on physiological systems in animals, including changes in the cardiovascular, endocrine, immune, central nervous and reproductive systems. Although short-lived, these changes can confound research if animals are utilized before homeostasis is restored and physiological measures return to normal. (Obernier and Baldwin, 2006).

Regardless of whether the animals are quarantined, newly received animals should be given a period of physiologic, behavioral, and nutritional acclimation before their use (Guide, 2010; Obernier and Baldwin, 2006). The length of time for acclimation will depend on the type and duration of animal transportation, the species, and the intended use of the animals. Researchers should consider how the physiological alterations caused by transport could confound data.

Considering this, rodents to be utilized in non-terminal research procedures at UGA, which have been transported commercially, should be provided a minimum 3 day (72 hours from arrival) acclimation period. However, if those animals are to undergo survival surgery or behavior testing, that acclimation period should be increased to 7 days. For all other live vertebrate animals intended for use in non-terminal research procedures at UGA, which have been transported commercially, a 7 day acclimation period should be provided.

Use of animals in terminal procedures does not require an acclimation period; however, an acclimation period is encouraged for scientific purposes. Animals transported between UGA-Athens campus locations do not require an acclimation period. Animal transport from a local, but off-campus, location is to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by either URAR or the IACUC to determine whether an acclimation period is necessary.

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Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. 2011. National Research Council of the National Academies, p. 111.

Guidelines for the Humane Transportation of Research Animals. 2006. National Research Council of the National Academies.

Obernier JA, Baldwin RL. 2006. Establishing an Appropriate Period of Acclimatization Following Transportation of Laboratory Animals. ILAR J. 47(4):364-369.