



Terms of Reference

AALAS-FELASA Working Group on Health Monitoring of Rodents for Animal Transfer

Background

Transfer of rodents between institutions for research purposes occurs continuously between animal facilities in the United States, Europe and worldwide. The logistics involved in these transfers become complex due to the scientific value of the animals, the legal hurdles that need to be addressed for inter-nation/country shipments, and the possibility of transmitting unwanted microbiological agents between institutions. With regard to this last aspect, receiving institutions usually require information on the health status of the animals from the institution of origin. This information can be very variable and difficult to interpret, which very often leads to costly and time consuming efforts (i.e. rederivation...) that may or may not be necessary before the animals are introduced in the recipient's colony. Also, in some instances the transfer of animals is organized by persons other than Attending Veterinarians or FELASA Category D persons and this can lead to further delays and possible loss of animal lives as the scope of the information transferred or the health status of the animals shipped may not be adequate for the receiving institution.

At the European level, FELASA has issued health monitoring recommendations for rodents that are widely followed in Europe and this has resulted in harmonization of practices and better quality of the animals used. It may be anticipated that the positive impact the recommendations have had on intra-European countries could be expanded to the international community as detailed by experts in this arena at the 2011 AALAS Meeting. A consensus on minimum health monitoring recommendations and presentation format which can be applied for international transfer of rodents is anticipated to protect the welfare of animals and facilitate the transfer process thereby saving resources.

Tasks, proposed line of work

The working group will:

- Review existing recommendations on rodent health monitoring that can be applied for rodent transfer.
- Review current practices of rodent transfer.
- Review literature on health monitoring results after rodent transfer and during quarantine.
- Review the prevalence of pathogens in different geographical areas.
- Propose the format that should be provided and the minimal information needed i.e. the agents tested for, frequency, dates (historical results), method, sample



- size, and laboratory performing the results that should be provided as a minimum.
- Propose a common report form to be used internationally that maintains and does not give up the flexibility and the necessity to adapt approaches to local needs.
 - Propose an easy to use approach that is understandable and feasible also for persons that are not Attending Veterinarians or FELASA Category D persons.
 - Propose the way information on pathology is to be included.
 - Define how the report can be associated to the microbiological unit of the animals in transfer.
 - Describe practical solutions for colonies with a high number of microbiological units, e.g. IVC
 - Recommend interpretation and measures to be taken by recipient institutions under different common scenarios, depending on the results shown in the reports and the characteristics of the institution (agents present in the animals vs health status and research characteristics of the institution).

Composition of the working group

The WG will have 6 members (including convenors), 3 nominated by each organization (AALAS and FELASA). Preference should be given to professionals with experience in different areas of health monitoring and animal transfer, and especially to individuals with a positive experience in international (US-Europe) collaborations. There will be 2 co-convenors, one from each organization.

Budget

A total 4000 Euro for telephone conferences and 1 face-to-face meeting, that should be scheduled during any international event (e.g.: AALAS) where some members may attend at their own expenses.

Deadline:

Two years after starting. The final report will have to be approved by both organizations before being submitted for publication.