

## **Best Practices for recordkeeping during and after anesthetic and/or surgery procedures on USDA-covered species (excludes mice, rats and birds)**

- Entries should be initialed or signed by the person who made the observation or administered the treatment. Each entry must be traceable to the person who recorded or performed it.
- The date and time of the entry should be recorded. Entries must be chronological and reference a specific time.
- Entries should be made proximately to the time of the observation or treatment. Write it down as it happens.
- These records must be kept for three years after the study is completed and readily available for inspection by regulatory personnel. This is a regulatory requirement by the USDA, AALAC, and most granting agencies.
- Drug treatments must be recorded so that a total dose is recorded or can be calculated, e.g. either recorded in total mg, or a volume plus a concentration. For example: 0.2 mg acepromazine, OR .0.1 ml acepromazine (2 mg/ml)
- During anesthesia and anesthetic recovery, physiologic parameters must be observed and recorded frequently. At a minimum a heart rate and respiratory rate should be checked every 15 minutes for a stable animal in a short procedure. Other observations should be made as warranted: body temperature, color of mucous membranes, etc. depending on the type and length of the procedure. Close monitoring is required. *Regulatory bodies assume that "if it wasn't recorded, it didn't happen".*
- The end of the monitoring period must be noted and signed by the person who made this determination, whether due to recovery or euthanasia. It must be clear that the animal was closely monitored as long as necessary.
- Recorded observations should include descriptive language, rather than only state a conclusion. Descriptive phrases include "active, no lameness noted", "all food consumed, normal feces present", "incision is intact", "swelling extends 1 cm from wound margins, no discharge noted", "attitude alert", "bight, alert, responsive". Inadequate phrases (without supporting descriptions) include "normal," "comfortable", "OK".
- Health observations must be documented at least daily for at least five days following the surgery or until suture removal and adequate healing of the surgical site, which ever occurs latest.
- Health observations must be documented at least daily for any procedure that involves exposed instrumentation, catheterization, bandage etc., until removal of the apparatus and adequate healing of the associated sites has occurred.
- Health observations must be documented at least daily for animals that exhibit signs of pain, distress, discomfort or other health complications until resolved.
- Health observations must be documented at least weekly after adequate healing has occurred.

- Daily post-surgical observations should include at least the following:
  - Observation of the comfort level of the animal. This can be evaluated by activity, mental attitude, elimination, food consumption, etc.
  - A specific check of the surgical wounds. Is there any discharge, redness, or swelling? Is the incision intact?
  - If any catheters or devices are in place, describe the condition of the device and record any procedures performed such as cleaning the skin exit site or flushing a catheter to keep it patent.
  - Any procedure-specific observations related to potential or unexpected complications such as organ failure, infection, ischemia, etc.