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LAB_022 UQBR Veterinary Care Program (Expiry: March 2026)

1 OBJECTIVE

- 1.1 To ensure all animals that are exhibiting unexpected abnormal behaviour, symptoms, or experiencing pain, suffering or distress receive swift and appropriate care or veterinary assistance.
- 1.2 This document is to act as an aid to ensure that all people involved in the care of animals understand and accept their role and responsibilities.
- 1.3 To ensure the records of animal monitoring satisfy the requirements of the AEC.
- 1.4 To document procedures for each UQBR Facility. Please refer to the UQBR Aquatics and the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre individual Veterinary Care Program documents.

NB: The use of (*) indicates this statement is dependent on the Facility procedures

NB: The use of () indicates this statement is dependent on AEC Approvals**


NB: Text in Blue is directly from *The Code*

1 DEFINITIONS and ACRONYMS

- 2.1 AEC - Animal Ethics Committee (as defined by the Code)
- 2.2 Abnormal behavior – This can be the first sign of ill health and can include but not be limited to visible problems, such as excessive scratching, reduced activity, abnormal nest building, increased aggression, lameness, decreased appetite, or poor body condition.
- 2.3 Contact - reasonable steps made to communicate. This includes landline, mobile and email communication. It cannot be assumed that contact has been made until a response is received. Any verbal contact should be followed with a written confirmation.
- 2.4 Competent - *the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required regarding the care and use of animals. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply knowledge and skill to new situations and environments (The Code).*
- 2.5 A Chief Investigator (CI) or Alternate Investigator (AI) are considered the owner of their AEC-approved research animals and are ultimately responsible for the project.
- 2.6 VO - Veterinary Officer for the Animal Ethics Unit, Office of Research Ethics
- 2.7 Distress – *an animal is in a negative mental state and has been unable to adapt to stressors so as to sustain a state of wellbeing. Distress may manifest as abnormal physiological or behavioral responses, a deterioration in physical and psychological health, or a failure to achieve successful biological function. Distress can be acute or chronic and may result in pathological conditions or death (The Code).*
- 2.8 Investigator: *Any person who uses animals for scientific purposes. Includes researchers, teachers, undergraduate and postgraduate students involved in research projects (The Code)*
- 2.9 Maintenance records (health log) – a daily log, diary, or report that is available in the animal room for notifying all entrants of any changes to an animal's health status or treatment or intervention given. E.g. Animal Identification, Right Sided Intra Peritoneal Injections, Initials of Operator.

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- 2.10 Monitoring - measures undertaken to assess, or to ensure the assessment of, the wellbeing of animals in accordance with the Code. Monitoring occurs at different levels (including those of investigators, animal carers and animal ethics committees) (*The Code*).
- 2.11 Pain – an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. It may elicit protective actions, result in learned avoidance and distress, and modify species-specific traits of behavior, including social behavior (*The Code*).
- 2.12 Program of Veterinary Care - system for the provision of veterinary care and advice. Elements of the program should include, where appropriate, animal clinical care; emergency care; preventive medicine; anaesthesia, analgesia and surgery; and animal quarantine. The extent of this program will depend on several factors, such as: the size of the establishment, the number of animals involved, the species used, the nature and complexity of the activities conducted (2.1.5) (*The Code*).
- 2.13 Unexpected Adverse Event - an event that may have a negative impact on the wellbeing of animals and was not foreshadowed in the approved project or activity. An unexpected adverse event may result from different causes, including but not limited to: • death of an animal, or group of animals, that was not expected (e.g. during surgery or anaesthesia, or after a procedure or treatment) • adverse effects following a procedure or treatment that were not expected • adverse effects in a larger number of animals than predicted during the planning of the project or activity, based on the number of animals actually used, not the number approved for the study • a greater level of pain or distress than was predicted during the planning of the project or activity • power failures, inclement weather, emergency situations or other factors external to the project or activity that have a negative impact on the welfare of the animals. (*The Code*).

2 CONTACT DETAILS OF RELEVANT PERSONS

UQBR Director

Mr Kevin Wathen-Dunn

Email: k.wathendunn@uq.edu.au

Office: 07 3346 3863

Mobile: 0411 020 572

Veterinary Officer, Office of Research Ethics

Dr Timothy Biffin BVSc MANZCVSc MVPHMgt

Email t.biffin@uq.edu.au

Office: 07 3443 1746


Mobile: 0419 927 128

UQBR Veterinarians

Dr Cora Lau BVSc (Hons) PhD and Dr Heidi Niland-Rowe BSc, BVMS

Conditions:

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Email: uqbrvetservices@uq.edu.au

3 RESPONSIBILITIES:

General

- 4.1 The Investigator has a responsibility for all matters that relate to the wellbeing of animals that are in their care. 2.4.1 Investigators have personal responsibility for all matters that relate to the wellbeing of animals that they use, including their housing, husbandry and care. This responsibility extends throughout the period of use approved by the AEC until provisions are made for the animal at the conclusion of their use (*The Code*).
- 4.2 In order to respond to unexpected changes in the welfare or health of their animal's the Investigators are responsible for ensuring they remain contactable by UQBR staff.
- 4.3 Animals not yet assigned to an Investigator are the responsibility of the Animal Facility/UQBR. 2.5.1 Before an animal is supplied to an approved project for which an investigator is responsible, responsibility for the wellbeing of the animal rests with the person who is engaged by the institution to provide care for the animals (e.g. Facility Manager, animal technician, stock handler) (*The Code*).
- 4.4 All persons responsible for the care and wellbeing of animals or performing experimental procedures must be competent with the appropriate animal care qualifications and experience. Training on assessing animal health, the use of score sheets and humane euthanasia techniques is available via UQBR or specific UQ training courses.

Within UQBR Facilities


- 4.5 Within UQBR facilities monitoring of the health of the animals and ensuring a timely response is the responsibility of all staff members. 2.5.15(vi) a Facility Manager, with support as required from the institution and other staff members, and advice from veterinarians, must arrange for experienced veterinary services in a timely manner, and ensure that staff follow veterinary advice regarding care, husbandry and health of animals, and biosecurity, in the Facility (*The Code*).

UQBR Veterinarians

- 4.6 UQBR Veterinarians provide a Program of Veterinary Care to all animals within UQBR facilities. A registered Veterinarians (UQBR, UQ QLD Certified) can provide veterinary care to animals, without being named as a Veterinarians on an AEC approved project, with the intent of providing advice, preventive care, treatment, diagnosis, anaesthesia, relieving pain or euthanising an animal.

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Unless specifically named as an Investigator on a project, no Veterinarians will perform activities that would be considered experimental and outside the scope of normal veterinary practice.

Example: A UQBR Veterinarians not named on an AEC approved project may collect blood from an animal for the purposes of obtaining a diagnosis of an unexpected disease but may not collect blood for the primary purpose of obtaining a scientific outcome.

UQBR Facility Managers

- 4.7 Specific responsibilities of the facility manager are as per Clauses 2.5.14-2.5.17 of the Code. Further to section 4.3 of this document, when clearly established, the facility manager may become the person ultimately responsible for a group of animals. [2.5.3 If more than one person is responsible for the care of animals \(e.g. animal technicians caring for animals in one or more animal breeding and holding facility ...\), a person must be identified who has ultimate responsibility for the care of those animals. Depending on the situation, this person may be the facility manager, or the investigator with ultimate responsibility for the project. Identification of a person with ultimate responsibility for the care of animals does not relieve the individual responsibility of each person of provides care for animals. \(The Code\).](#)

UQBR Director

- 4.8 Provides guidance and support to enable to the organisational unit to meet its obligations as outlined in *The Code*.

Veterinary Officer, Office of Research Ethics


- 4.9 Provides advice to the institute, the AEC and all personnel involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes relative to legislative obligations. In response to an Unexpected Adverse Event which present immediate concerns for animal welfare, human, animal or environmental safety, or reputational damage to the institute the Veterinary Officer (VO) will likely take action to resolve concerns (this is as per UQ AEC procedure: Unexpected Adverse Events).

4 EQUIPMENT

Not applicable

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5 PROCEDURE

General animal care and health monitoring

- 5.2** Animal living conditions at a cage/pen level must be inspected daily. [3.1.7 The living conditions in indoor facilities in which animals are bred, held and used must be checked daily and 3.2.1\(i\) monitoring and assessment of animals by a competent person with sufficient frequency to ensure that sick or injured animals are promptly detected and identified, and that appropriate action is taken \(*The Code*\). Note this also applies to outdoor animals.](#)
- 5.3** Individual animals or cages are examined as per the room specific health log, diary, database, project specific records, or score sheets. These daily monitoring records are to be stored in a way to make them accessible to all relevant UQBR staff.
- 5.4** Monitoring and assessment of animal wellbeing is recorded within the room log, diary, database as per the Facility specific procedure.
- 5.5** In the event of any abnormal behaviour, visible injuries, signs of pain, distress or other suspected adverse events the animal's condition is to be assessed as being of Low or High level of urgency. See section 6.0 for the Categorisation of Urgency.
- 5.6** In the event of any wide spread abnormal living conditions or health and welfare issues contact the Facility Manager, UQBR Veterinarians and UQBR Director. These circumstances are not within the scope of this SOP.

Categorising the Degree of Urgency

Low level Urgency. All the following conditions are met.


- The animal appears bright, alert and responsive.
- The UQ generic score sheet has a total score of less than 4 and no more than 1 in any category (Note at the time of drafting this SOP a NEW Score Sheet is under development).
- A score of 1 was met in any of the categories, an item Failed, or an 'Action' was issued in the daily logged iAuditor report (refer to QASP specific operational procedures).
- A score indicating low level urgency based on scoring system used.
- It is likely the animal will remain stable for 24 hr.

High level of Urgency. Any of the following conditions are met

- The animal is distressed or withdrawn.
- Breathing is labored or difficult.
- The animal has any moderate to severe unexpected injuries.
- A UQBR generic score sheet has a total score of more than 4 and more than 1 in any category.
- A score of 2 or greater was met in any of the categories, several items Failed, or an 'Action' was issued in the daily logged iAuditor report (QASP).

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- Any project specific score sheet indicates an intervention greater than daily monitoring
- It is likely the animal will deteriorate, reach a humane endpoint or die.
- You feel the animal's welfare is compromised.
- You are uncertain how to categorise the animal.

Procedure relative to the Degree of Urgency identified

Procedure on Identification of an unexpected abnormal animal assessed as low level of urgency.


- Check project specific information and score sheets. Is this unexpected or is there a protocol for this event? It may be a phenotype of this strain or an expected outcome of a procedure.
- Contact the Facility Manager, CI or AI via email and/or phone. Respond as advised.
- Enter observations in to the Facility specific based records.
- Peruse the records to determine whether other animals within the same room have shown similar signs or symptoms
- Record the health status using Facility protocol to identify the individual animal, abnormal sign seen the date and any other relevant information. Also include this on any Facility specific health logs.
- The CI and AI should be contacted again if a response has not been received within 24 hr. Do not assume that a CI or AI has been contacted until a response has been received.
- If there is no response from the CI or AI contact the UQBR Veterinarians and follow the advice given.

Procedure on Identification of an unexpected abnormal animal assessed as high level urgency

- Check project specific information and score sheets. Is this an expected or a humane end point, or is there a protocol for this event?
- Contact the Facility Manager, the UQBR Veterinarians, and CI or AI immediately. Attempt to contact all individuals by both email and phone. Respond as advised. Do not assume that contact has been made until a response is received.
- Enter observations in to the Facility specific records.
- Examine the records to determine whether other animals within the room have shown similar signs or symptoms.
- Record animal status using Facility protocol to identify the individual animal, abnormal signs that were observed, and date and any other relevant information.
- A reasonable period of time must be allowed for the CI or AI to respond. During normal working days the Investigator will have until the end of the normal work day (2:30 or 3pm) or one hour on weekends and public holidays. This timeframe should be allowed unless there are overwhelming animal welfare concerns. **2.5.6 If an emergency welfare intervention is considered necessary for an animal allocated to a project (e.g. treatment or humane killing of an animal), animal carers must take reasonable steps to first contact the responsible investigator. However, the welfare of the animal must be the priority at all times and may necessitate immediate intervention (*The Code*).**

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 <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA CREATE CHANGE</p>	<p>UQ Animal Ethics Committee - Standard Operating Procedure LAB_022 UQBR Veterinary Care Program Institutional author: UQ Biological Resources AEC Reviewed & Approved: March 2025 SOP Expiry: March 2026</p>	Version 5
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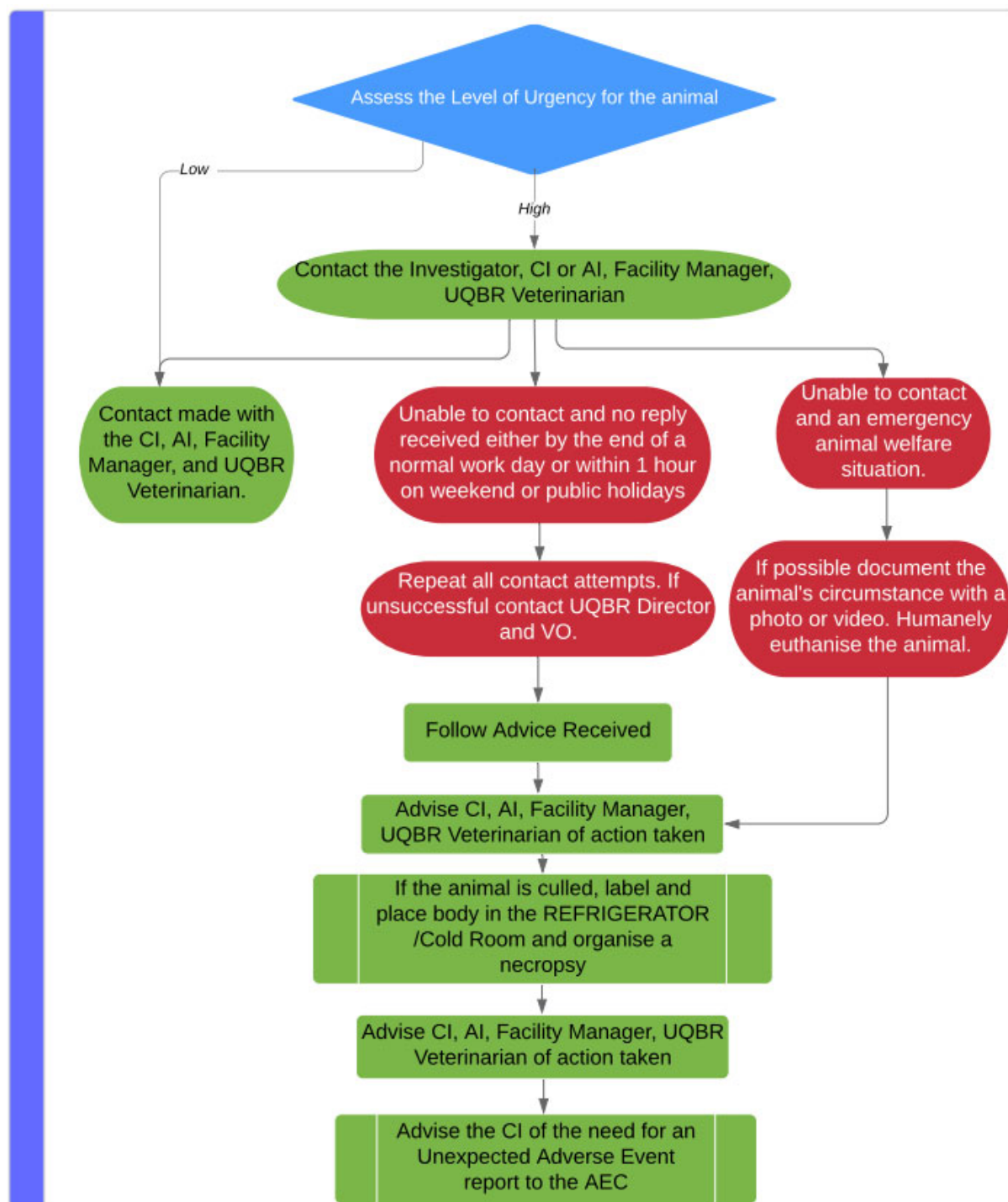
- (vii) If the Facility Manager, CI or AI, or UQBR Veterinarians cannot be contacted, the UQBR Director and the VO should be contacted.
- (viii) If an emergency welfare intervention is necessary and the CI or AI, UQBR Veterinarians or VO cannot be contacted the welfare of the animal must be given priority and may be euthanised or otherwise treated.
2.5.6 If an emergency welfare intervention is considered necessary for an animal allocated to a project (e.g. treatment or humane killing of an animal), animal carers must take reasonable steps to first contact the responsible investigator. However, the welfare of the animal must be the priority at all times and may necessitate immediate intervention. Animal carers must promptly advise the responsible investigator of actions taken and the reasons for emergency interventions (*The Code*).
- (ix) If the animal is euthanized or otherwise treated the CI or AI, Facility Manager and UQBR Veterinarians must then be notified of the steps taken and reasons for the emergency intervention. It is advised to document the nature of the emergency by photo or video.
- (x) After either contact has been made with the UQBR Veterinarians or the animal has been examined by the UQBR Veterinarians, both the CI or AI and Facility Manager are to be contacted again.
- (xi) If the animal has been culled a necropsy should be conducted by a person competent to perform necropsies. Or the body is to be labelled and placed in the refrigerator/cold room until a necropsy can be performed or the 48 hr storage limit has been reached. (Do not place in freezer).
- (xii) The CI is responsible for ensuring that the AEC is notified of any Unexpected Adverse Event by completing the Unexpected Adverse Event report form. . 2.4.18 (ix) Investigators must ... [notify] the AEC, in response to unexpected adverse events and emergencies, in accordance with institutional and AEC policies and procedures <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/integrity-compliance/animal-forms-resources>

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Pathway for Contact Procedures for Animal Health Assessment

This flow diagram should be read in conjunction with the Procedures outlined within this section.



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Figure 1. Pathway for Contact Procedures for Animal Health Assessment

Procedure on the Identification of a dead animal


- 5.7 Notify the Facility Manager and the lab, and depending on the context this could include the CI or AI.
- 5.8 Peruse the records to determine whether other animals within the room have shown similar signs or symptoms or have died.
- 5.9 Arrange a necropsy and investigation as soon as possible by either:
 - 5.9.1 Contacting the Facility Manager or UQBR Veterinarians.
 - 5.9.2 Using the email template outlined in the Appendix to alert the lab to progress a necropsy where required.
- 5.10 The necropsy should be performed by competent staff to ensure a thorough examination process. This process will include a record of findings.
- 5.11 Label and place the animal in the refrigerator (NOT FREEZER) or cold room. At a minimum the animal should be labelled with its unique identifying number and the CI or AI details.
- 5.12 Update the Animal Database, room or project diary and/or cage cards.

6 REFERENCE INFORMATION

1. Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF): <http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/>
2. Guidelines to promote the wellbeing of animals used for scientific purposes (NHMRC, 2008): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/ea18.pdf>
3. The Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (8th Edition, NHMRC 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea28>
4. Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits (DEPI, Vic 2004): <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-legislation/victorian-codes-of-practice-for-animal-welfare/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-and-care-of-laboratory-mice,-rats,-guinea-pigs-and-rabbits>
5. UQ Animal Ethics Unit SOPs: <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/integrity-compliance/standard-operating-procedures-sops>
6. UQ OHS Incident Report Form: <http://www.uq.edu.au/ohs/index.html?page=141331>
7. UQBR SOPs: [V:UQBR/SOPs/Common/UQBR SOPs](http://www.uq.edu.au/secure/uqbr-sops) and <http://biological-resources.uq.edu.au/secure/uqbr-sops>

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7 APPENDIX

8.1 Suggested Email Template – Animal assessed with a Low-Level Urgency Health Issue:

SUBJECT: Animal assessed with a Low-Level Urgency Health Issue:

Hi (*Researcher as per contact list and relevant staff*),

During health checks this morning we have found the following animal with a health concern:

- CI or AI Name (First or Last name of responsible researcher)
- Strain
- Room
- Colony
- ID and Sex
- Ethics Number
- Observations and if a common condition what disease it may be consistent with (if known)

If you could please check this animal and confirm assessment on the cage card or animal prn and the room documents. UQBR staff and Veterinarians are happy to assist with health assessment.

Please confirm any actions required via email so staff are aware of the action plan for this animal.


UQBR has a Program of Veterinary Care and we require a response within 24 hr before escalating this for welfare reasons.

Regards

(*Name*)

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8.2 Suggested Email and Text Template - Animal Found with a High-Level Urgent Health Concern:

SUBJECT: URGENT - Animal Found with a High-Level Urgent Health Concern:

Hi (Researcher as per contact list and relevant staff),

During health checks this morning we have found the following animal with a URGENT health concern:

- CI or AI Name (First/Last of responsible researcher)
- Strain
- Room
- Colony
- ID and Sex
- Ethics Number
- Observations and if a common condition what disease it may be consistent with (if known)

We require an IMMEDIATE response detailing animal intervention or a request for euthanasia.

Please confirm any actions required via email so staff are aware of the action plan for this animal.


UQBR has a Program of Veterinary Care and we require a response by 2:30pm today/1 hr on weekends (choose whichever correct). If no response is received this animal may be culled for animal welfare reasons.

Regards

(Name)

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8.3 Suggested Email Template - If High-Level Urgency Health animal is euthanised with or without direction from researcher and relevant UQBR staff.

SUBJECT: Animal Found with a High-Level Urgent Health Concern and was euthanised

Hi (*Researcher as per contact list and relevant UQBR staff*),

Euthanasia has been determined necessary for the below animal for welfare reasons under the direction of the UQBR Veterinary Care Program.

- CI or AI Name (First/Last name of responsible researcher)
- Strain
- Room
- Colony
- ID and Sex
- Ethics Number
- Observations and if a common condition what disease it may be consistent with (if known)

If this was an unexpected health issue it is likely that you will need to notify the AEC. Please refer to the following website [UQ AEU](#) to obtain a copy of the Adverse Event Form or refer to the UQ AEC procedure: Unexpected Adverse Events if you require clarification.

UQBR staff are available to complete any necropsies which must be completed as soon as possible and within 48 hr of death. Please consider if any tissues are required at the time of necropsy. Alternatively feel free to discuss this matter with the Facility Manager.


Please be advised this animal has been placed in the Facility's refrigerator or cold room, if not removed within 48 hr the body will be disposed in accordance with procedures.

Regards

(Name)

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8.4 Suggested Email Template – Confirming Deceased Animals

SUBJECT: **Animal Found Deceased**

Hi (*Researcher as per contact list and relevant staff*),

During health checks this morning we have found the following animal deceased:

- CI or AI Name (First/Last name of responsible researcher)
- Strain
- Room
- Colony
- ID and Sex
- Ethics Number
- Found Dead

If this was an unexpected death it is likely that you will need to notify the AEC. Please refer to the following website [UQ AEU](#) to obtain a copy of the Adverse Event Form or refer to the UQ AEC procedure: Unexpected adverse events if you require clarification.

UQBR staff are available to complete any necropsies which must be completed as soon as possible and within 48 hr of death. Please consider if any tissues are required at the time of necropsy. Alternatively feel free to discuss this matter with the Facility Manager.

Please be advised this animal has been placed in the Facility's refrigerator or cold room, if not removed within 48 hr the body will be disposed of in accordance with procedures.

Regards,

(*Name*)

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