



University Committee on Animal Care

Policy for Tail-cutting of Rodents

Purpose: "Tail-cutting" involves cutting a piece of tissue from the terminal end of the tail for the purpose of obtaining a small tissue sample / biopsy for laboratory determinations of the genetic characteristics of rodent stocks or lines. At other institutions, this procedure is routinely performed without anesthesia when the rodents are less than four weeks old and less than 5 mm of tissue is removed. At that age anesthetic risk is higher and direct observation suggests that pain seems to be minimal. However, experts agree that taking such tissue samples from older animals is painful and analgesia/anesthesia should be administered.

Less invasive techniques have been reported that might offer more humane alternatives. For example, genetic characterization has been accomplished using small tissue samples from ear punching, the cells present in very small saliva samples, or an ocular sampling method.

Policy: Tail-cutting may be performed in rodents without anesthesia provided that they are no older than four weeks of age and that no more than 5 mm of tissue is removed.

Tail-cutting mice older than four weeks of age or removal of more than 5 mm of tissue must be performed under appropriate anesthesia (e.g., Ketamine / Xylazine, Isoflurane, etc.), and hemostasis may be necessary.

If required, tails may be cut a second time but not at an interval of less than one week from the first biopsy, anesthesia must be used and a procedure for control of bleeding must be described.

Approved by the ETSU University Committee on Animal Care: January 16, 2004

Revised and approved: September 14, 2021