Animal Health and Surgery Records

Health and surgery records are meant to convey necessary information to everyone involved in an animal’s care. Health and surgery records should be sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate the delivery of adequate health care. They should be current and legible.

Health records must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Identity of the animal.
- Descriptions of any illness, injury, distress, and/or behavioral abnormalities and the resolution of any noted problem. A diagnosis and prognosis should be included when appropriate.
- Dates, details, and results (if appropriate) of all medically related observations, examinations, tests, and other such procedures.
- Dates and other details of all treatments, including the name, dose, route, frequency, and duration of treatment with drugs or other medications. (A “check-off” system to record when treatment is given each day is recommended.)
- Criteria and/or schedule for re-evaluation(s) when appropriate by the facility veterinarian.

Records of terminal surgical procedures must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Identity of the animal.
- Date of the procedure.
- Type of procedure.
- Pre and intra-operative medications including the name, dose, and route.

Records of survival surgical procedures must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Identity of the animal.
- Date of the procedure.
- Type of procedure.
- Pre and intra-operative medications including the name, dose, and route.
- For USDA-regulated species (see below), documentation of intra-operative monitoring of anesthesia.
- Post-operative treatments, including the dates, name, dose, route, frequency, and duration. (A “check-off” system to record when treatment is given each day may be beneficial.)
- Descriptions of any negative outcomes from the procedure and the resolution of any noted problems.
- Criteria and/or schedule for re-evaluation(s) when appropriate.

As long as all required information is readily available, records may be kept in any format convenient to the PI or facility veterinarian. In the absence of an individual record, the Animal Health Report form is an acceptable format to report and document animal health issues. Routine husbandry and preventive medical procedures (e.g., vaccinations and dewormings) performed on a group of animals may be recorded on herd-health-type records. Individual treatments of an animal must be on an entry specific to that animal. To assist caretakers with the evaluation of their animals, the date of any surgical procedure must be noted on the animal’s cage card.
Health records may be held by the PI or facility veterinarian or divided between both (if appropriately cross-referenced). An animal’s health records must be held for at least 3 years after the expiration of the protocol to which the animal is assigned.

When a USDA regulated animal (see below) is transferred to another party, a copy of the animal’s health record must be transferred with the animal. The transferred record should contain the animal’s individual medical history, information on any chronic or ongoing health problems, and information on the most current preventive medical procedures (for example, the most recent vaccinations and dewormings).

Note - USDA regulated species include all vertebrates except cold blooded species, rats in the genus *Rattus*, mice in the genus *Mus*, birds, and farm animals used in agricultural research.