

Dear UVA Research Community,

The Center for Comparative Medicine (CCM) will continue operation throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, in order to provide animal husbandry and veterinary care. During that time CCM will continue to provide the services and support you have come to expect. However, we anticipate some reduction of staff will occur over the next several months due to illness, similar to what each laboratory may experience.

During these ensuing months CCM will not be able to take on additional responsibilities of weaning mice or caring for colonies that are roles currently performed by investigators. CCM will not maintain fish, frogs, birds, reptiles and salamanders, etc. where husbandry is currently the responsibility of the investigators' laboratories. PIs should plan now for designating employees to maintain these animals and possibly consider partnering with other labs if staffing levels are significantly impacted.

As defined levels in CCM staffing reduction occur, some services will be curtailed so that the remaining CCM staff can focus on animal care. At a 75% level of animal care staffing, sanitation will be discontinued in corridors and support spaces like procedure rooms. We will also discontinue Quality Control procedures such as CHARM testing and biological indicators for non-biohazard sterilizers. Ancillary services such as weaning will also be discontinued.

Should CCM staffing reduce further to 50%, animal care staff will discontinue room sanitation other than monthly, and cage changing schedules will be replaced with spot changing of soiled caging only. All cages and animals will be observed, and provided food and water, however clean caging will be done based on how wet the cage is and how soiled it appears. Mice that reach weaning age that are not separated by the laboratory staff will likely be euthanized. CCM will be seeking volunteers from the research staff that are willing to reliably be available to provide animal care.

If CCM staffing drops to 25% or below, in addition to the reduced services above, CCM will need to begin to euthanize some mice. We recognize that this would be an extreme measure, and while we think that this has very low probability it is nevertheless a possibility, however remote, and we must prepare for it properly. We will work with the research labs to identify strains of mice (or other animals) that cannot be replaced. These 'critical to maintain' strains will need to be carefully identified and have their cages well labelled at that time. Each laboratory should develop a master list of the strains they have that need to be retained, and a list of the strains that can be replaced. Strains that can be replaced commercially, or that are cryopreserved, will be euthanized, and then when the staffing shortage is over these strains can be replaced.

These are difficult times when critical and difficult decisions will need to be made. CCM staff will do everything it can to provide for the health and well-being of the research animals. With cooperation from the research community, CCM will keep all the research animals healthy until the pandemic sufficiently abates to allow the University to return to business as usual.