

Expectations for Personnel Performing Surgery

All persons performing survival surgery on vertebrate animals must have adequate training and experience appropriate to the procedure and to the species. The ACUC may assess someone's proficiency on the basis of education, medical or technical credentials, successful previous experience, and/or observation by a member of the veterinary staff.

For survival studies on mice and rats, the ACUC expects the surgeon will be in compliance with the applicable ARAC guidelines governing rodent survival surgery (http://oacu.od.nih.gov/ARAC/documents/Rodent_Surgery.pdf).

The ACUC expects the surgeon to utilize aseptic technique to include the following:

- Clipping of hair and skin preparation by cleaning the surgery site by gently scrubbing with betadine or chlorhexidine and wiping with alcohol, a total of three times, using sterile gauze or sterile cotton tip applicators.
- Use of sterile instruments that have been autoclaved.
- Keeping the tips of the instruments from becoming contaminated by use of sterile fields or resting them in such a way to prevent contact with non-sterile surfaces. Tips may be resterilized between animals or when necessary using a glass bead sterilizer.
- Use of sterile surgeon's gloves or clean latex or nitrile gloves when a "tips-only" technique is utilized.
- Standard animal facility protective equipment to include a lab coat, face mask, and hair bonnet.

Animal users responsible for surgery or for care of operated animals must also be familiar with proper use of anesthetics and analgesics, signs of pain in animals, and the associated record keeping requirements (http://oacu.od.nih.gov/ARAC/documents/Pain_and_Distress.pdf). Opportunities for training that exist within the NCI animal program and can be accessed by contacting the Facility Veterinarian, Facility Manager, or Head of Laboratory Animal Medicine. Successful surgical outcomes are most likely following appropriate planning, training, and dialogue with the veterinary staff.

When new personnel who are expected to perform surgeries are added to an existing animal study proposal through a modification; administrative approval may not be granted until proficiency can be evaluated or ascertained. This may occur by discussion or interaction between the new surgeon and the veterinary staff. The ACUC typically delegates the approval process to the Facility Veterinarian. Continuing review of surgical outcomes occurs with daily health checks in the animal facility and follows up by the Facility Veterinarian on any animals with unexpected sequelae. To ensure that the facility staff is aware of post-op animals, the cages of any rodents undergoing survival surgery must be identified by a colored post operative tag, which is also dated.

When animal study proposals or modifications that include a surgical procedure are submitted, the committee may grant limited approval or request that a member of the veterinary staff provide oversight and assurance that the surgeon's skills are consistent with standards of modern veterinary practices. Post-approval monitoring is documented by the ACUC-Coordinator. Problems identified will be corrected immediately, and if serious, may be reported by to the ACUC for deliberation.