

WVU IACUC POLICY: **Acclimation of Newly Acquired Animals**

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a period of acclimation for animals arriving at West Virginia University (WVU) from a commercial vendor or another institution. This policy applies to all animals used for research, teaching and training at WVU.

Background

According to the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (2011) and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Testing* (2020), newly received animals should be given a period for physiologic, psychological, and nutritional stabilization before their use. Acclimation periods are essential for incoming animals to recover from the stress of shipment and adjust to the housing environment prior to experiencing additional manipulations. In addition, animals may manifest signs of underlying medical conditions during this early period, which can then be detected by animal care personnel and addressed by the veterinary staff prior to research, teaching or training use. It is generally accepted that acclimation results in a more stable physiological and psychological state, and subsequently, more reliable scientific data.

The completion of the acclimation period is NOT a replacement for the quarantine period, although they may run concurrently. Quarantine periods and conditions are defined by the WVU veterinary staff, are often longer than acclimation periods, and are used to prevent the spread of disease to existing healthy animals housed at a facility.

Policy

- All newly received animals require a species-specific acclimation period, which begins at the time the animal arrives at the WVU facility, prior to experimental use.
- Transportation between WVU facilities may cause stress, and investigators should consider the impact of intra-campus transport upon research, teaching and training outcomes when determining the timeline for experimentation.
- If acclimation involves conversion to a new diet, then acclimation is defined as the point when the animal is consistently consuming the new diet. This will supersede the minimum time allowances below, and more time for adjustment to a new diet may be required.
- No experimental manipulations or breeding may be performed during the acclimation period. Only health assessment intake exams by the WVU veterinary staff, and administration of medically necessary treatments, may occur during the acclimation period.
- Any deviations from this policy require prior IACUC approval. Experimentally necessary exceptions to the acclimation period may be approved when scientific justification is submitted in writing and is part of an approved animal use protocol or protocol amendment.

For example: rodents may be used on arrival for acute non-survival procedures if outlined in the IACUC approved protocol.

- Minimum required acclimation periods by species:

Species	Minimum
Rodents (<i>Mus</i> and <i>Rattus</i> spp.)	3 calendar days
Fish used in biomedical research	3 calendar days
Birds used in biomedical research	5 calendar days or once adjusted to diet.
USDA-covered species (including wild caught mammals, guinea pigs, rabbits, ferrets, dogs, cats, and livestock used in biomedical research)	5 calendar days
Agricultural species	5 calendar days
All species- Non-Survival Procedure	1 calendar day

References

1. [Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations](#), United States Department of Agriculture, 2017.
2. [Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#), National Research Council, 2011.
3. [Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching](#), Federation of Animal Science Societies, 2010.