

VCU Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Animal Research Facilities

- The Division of Animal Resources is working to ensure that essential animal husbandry services are maintained.
- We do not recommend any new animal import or export submissions because many institutions are no longer receiving imports or delivering exports. Contact Amanda Richardson at acrichardson@vcu.edu or 628-8585 before submitting new requests.
- Consider temporarily halting all new animal orders.
- Carefully consider refraining from starting any new studies. Particularly those which require intensive monitoring or husbandry levels.
- We do not recommend euthanizing animals currently, but we urge researchers to consider cryopreserving their valuable transgenic mouse strains and only maintain the minimum numbers of needed breeding colonies.
- Initiate cryopreservation of valuable mouse strains. Click [here](#) to read more...
- The university will communicate any disruptions to building or laboratory access.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:

- Principal investigators and research lab managers should develop a plan in case a significant percentage of your staff is out or unable to come to work. Consider altering work schedules to complete critical parts of your experiments while limiting close contact with others.
- Depending upon the nature of your research, you might consider prioritizing work and identifying any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may fall ill or are otherwise unable to come to work.
- Consider rescheduling experiments that cannot be interrupted due to staff absences, limitations of supplies, and other factors outside of your direct control.
- If a communication plan for your research group is not already in place, ensure that you have accurate and updated contact information for all lab staff so everyone receives timely information. Please update contact information on animal care and use protocols.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with research staff members.

- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).
- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.

Measures you can take to prevent the spread of illness:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing in the laboratory or animal vivarium areas.
- Disinfect common lab areas and touchpoints with 70% ethanol or sodium hypochlorite based wipes (e.g. door knobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, telephone).
- Remind staff to stay home when they are not feeling well.
- Identify work that can be done from home or remotely, such as data analysis.
- Avoid in-person meetings. Use remote work technologies such as Zoom meetings.

Safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise maximum caution.
- Ensure that hazardous materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured.