



January 26, 2024.

To all IVS and PLAR Users:

In an effort to continue to improve our Rodent Colony Health Surveillance Program, we implemented a “hybrid” system (live animal and environmental monitoring) health surveillance in September 2022. This system has led to the reduction of live animal use by half, improved emotional fatigue of our animal care staff, and validated the testing efficacy of environmental monitoring in our facilities.

Environmental health monitoring (EHM), is supported by >25 peer-reviewed publications and is used widely among many institutions, including the University of Washington that moved to 100% EHM in 2016. This method of rodent health monitoring continues to gain traction among many institutions and was a Panel Discussion at the 74th Annual AALAS National Meeting, with overwhelming support of these methods.

With the success of our pilot “hybrid” program over the past two years, we are ready to move to ~100% EHM for our routine trimester testing in our Pullman and Spokane facilities. In outbreak situations or unique quarantine situations, we may need to implement multimodality testing which could include live sentinels.

As we have discussed in the past, due to the nature of the testing which is identification of DNA, this method is very sensitive, and we may experience positive results in colonies that have been historically negative with live animal soiled bedding sentinels. These positive results may be false positives or positives of low-level prevalence that we have not detected previously. If positive results are found, we will follow up with extensive sampling to ensure the validity of the results. If we do verify positive results, we will work closely with the PI, vivarium users and IVS/PLAR staff to develop a case-by case outbreak plan.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to the transition away from live animal sentinels to EHM, to help us fulfill our obligations to the 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) in animal research.

Sincerely,

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