

### MEMORANDUM

To: Principal Investigators

From: Michael F Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement and Institutional Official for Animal Care

Date: March 21, 2020

Subject: Research Operations Preparedness for Animal Users

I am writing in follow up to my memo to the broader research community dated March 16, 2020<sup>1</sup>, advising faculty researchers about the urgent need to implement social distancing in laboratories and specialized research facilities and to begin planning for more widespread operational disruptions on campus.

While we hope that such plans will not be needed, we are mindful of other R1 institutions' experiences responding to COVID-19 and local or state restrictions on movement and gathering. Our colleagues at institutions in the San Francisco area had 12-24 hours warning to enact such plans, once the regional restrictions were implemented. The only responsible course is to put in place concrete actions now to mitigate the impact on health and safety, critical data and infrastructure and research continuity.

I offer the following guidance, informed by input from our Animal Care Services veterinarians, staff experts, compliance committee members, and academic and administrative leadership – and affirmed through comparison with other R1 research institutions, the American Veterinary Medicine Association and Federal agencies.

**Human health, welfare and safety must be our highest priority, consistent with the Chancellor's decisions and directives to date regarding the campus' COVID-19 response and planning.**

We recognize the significant ethical and regulatory obligations that animal researchers face in these circumstances. UMass Amherst is committed to the principles of animal welfare and to the mandate to “replace, reduce and refine” in designing and conducting animal research. While it is not ideal to interrupt ongoing research using animals, it may become unavoidable due to staffing limitations, public mandates to shelter in place, or other logistical challenges.

It is essential that each PI has a plan for their research animals/experimentation. The following points provide a framework for thinking about this planning:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://t.e2ma.net/webview/zoyb9d/97687c313772f52add12700a03e74bda>

- It is important that PIs recognize that Animal Care Services (ACS) is also under a mandate to reduce the presence of individuals on campus, and to enact social distancing for anyone while present, including in the vivaria.
- PIs and their research groups should assess their ongoing projects to determine what on-site activities involving animals can be ended, suspended, or postponed.
  - Ongoing research activities should be reduced to the absolute minimum.
  - Activities that can be terminated/suspended/postponed should be terminated/suspended/postponed (e.g., breeding) – consult with ACS if you have specific questions or concerns about how best to accomplish this goal and in any case that impacts animal welfare.
  - Activities that cannot be terminated/suspended/postponed should be accomplished as quickly as possible, with staff maintaining social distancing while on campus; personnel should be on campus only for the minimum time necessary.
  - In order to facilitate social distancing, ACS may assign specific times each day for each lab to enter specific vivaria (subject to change in consultation with faculty users for lab-specific requests).
  - For work with unique genetic lines that can be postponed but where animals must be maintained on site, only the absolute minimum number of animals should be kept which would allow continuity of the work once this crisis has passed.
  - All PIs should be prepared in the event of a rapid change in the ability to access campus. This would likely include severely restricted access (critical approved personnel with permission only) and each PI should plan now for that scenario with a list of the few staff essential to rapidly reduce animal census and stop all ongoing animal research.
- ACS will continue to maintain sufficient husbandry staff daily to ensure the health and welfare of all protocol-covered research animals on campus.

Research & Engagement is working to ensure timely and appropriate guidance to the research community. We will post and distribute updates as conditions warrant and as expected in these dynamic and unprecedented circumstances. Please see <https://www.umass.edu/research/covid-19-resources-guidance> which now includes a log of updates.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and attention to these important matters in this unprecedented situation.