

Surgery

Item 4 – Documentation of Post-Surgical Recovery

An important component of post-surgical care is observation of the animal and documentation of its recovery from anesthesia and/or major surgery. Major surgery penetrates and exposes a body cavity or produces significant impairment of physiological function. The intensity and type of monitoring necessary will vary with the species and the procedure and might be greater during the immediate anesthetic recovery period than later in postoperative recovery.

Documentation of post-surgical recovery is **required** for all vertebrate species. USDA regulations, PHS policy and AAALAC standards all require adequate record keeping for any animal undergoing anesthesia, such that the frequency and adequacy of monitoring can be assessed. It is preferable that these records be maintained in the animal room during the monitoring period, but they may be kept in the laboratory as long as they are readily accessible to the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), Department of Laboratory Animal Resources (DLAR) and regulatory authorities*.

During the anesthetic recovery period, the animal should be in a clean, dry area where trained personnel can observe it often. Immediately following the anesthetic episode, animals should be checked at a minimum of every 15 minutes until able to maintain sternal recumbency (can hold themselves upright). Particular attention should be given to cardiovascular and respiratory function as well as thermoregulation. Supplemental heating for rodent species should be provided in a manner that will allow self-accommodation as sedation wears off. Additional care may include administration of parenteral fluids for maintenance of water and electrolyte balance, analgesics, and other drugs. Following the anesthetic recovery period, animals should be checked at least daily (including weekends) for a reasonable period of time as to expect the animal to have fully recovered from the procedure.

The format of documentation is left up to the discretion of the investigator, but must include adequate information such that the frequency of monitoring, mechanism of monitoring, and specific personnel performing the monitoring can be determined. Standardized charts to document post-surgical recovery are available from DLAR.

*For USDA-covered species (not including mice, rats and birds), postoperative monitoring records must be maintained within DLAR as well.

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