



### **Policy on Preservation of Animals Affected by a Disastrous Event**

PHS Policy states that institutions receiving federal funds have an obligation to protect the federal investment in research by exercising due diligence. This protection covers research animals, personnel, facilities, and research data. Therefore, The UGA Animal Care and Use Program is required to have a “Disaster/Contingency Plan,” including a method for preserving animals that are necessary for critical research or are irreplaceable.

The IACUC encourages all investigators using animals for research to protect and insure their animals and work. Investigators working on federal or state grants have guidelines for preserving equipment and data funded by these entities, and other funding sources should have guidelines for safe guarding work supported by their money.

**To the extent that it can be safely and responsibly carried out in a disaster scenario, every effort must be made to ensure either the safety or humane euthanasia of all animals under the care and ownership of UGA, regardless of their degree of importance to ongoing research or instruction.**

#### **Preservation of Irreplaceable Animals and Animals Necessary for Critical Research**

During a disastrous event, OACU and URAR will work with local, state, and federal authorities as applicable to preserve animal health and welfare. Research projects may be stopped if there is a prolonged period of physical plant or staff outage. Every effort will be made to preserve animal lives, including transportation of animals to alternative housing if their current location is not suitable for animal housing. Disasters that create a situation in which all animals cannot be preserved necessitate making decisions about which animals, if any, will be preserved.

#### **Investigator Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that their research and data will not be compromised by a disastrous event. Investigators are encouraged to cryopreserve unique rodent models. Data should be backed up with several copies stored at offsite locations. Investigators with irreplaceable animals or animals necessary for critical research housed in URAR animal facilities should collaborate with URAR to label those cages or animals for easy identification during a disastrous event, and a consistent, obvious and easily maintained system of identification should be arranged. This identification should be updated as necessary to be effective (e.g., replacement breeders must be identified as previously identified breeders age beyond reproductive efficiency).

**Criteria Incorporated into Priorities for Response**

A disastrous event is complex, and many factors will affect the response. If all animals cannot be preserved, some general criteria will be incorporated into the response. These criteria are identified in collaboration with the URAR veterinarians and staff, investigators, and appropriate stake holders.

- Animal previously identified and marked as irreplaceable / necessary for critical research will have priority over similar animals that have not been previously identified.
- If feasible, URAR veterinarians and staff will attempt to contact the researchers of animals which are not identified, to determine which animals should be prioritized. This may not be possible, depending on the situation, so prior labeling of animals is highly recommended.
- Animals housed in BSL3 containment must not be moved out of containment, and must be euthanized within containment if housing conditions are not adequate for their well-being.

For more information, please see the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare article "[Who Ya Gonna Call?](#)"