

TO: Principal Investigators and Administrators

FROM: Jeff Wyatt DVM, MPH, DACLAM  
Executive Director, Animal Resource

Stephen Dewhurst, PhD  
Senior Associate Dean for Basic Science Research

RE: PLAN FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT IN VIVARIUM  
SERVICES FOR ALL MOUSE USERS

DATE: December 29, 2008

In light of faculty concerns regarding the quality of the services provided to mouse users, URMCM plans to implement comprehensive changes in vivarium services for all mouse users. The goal of these changes is to establish a single high quality standard for care that is necessary for all mice at URMCM. These comprehensive changes will be implemented at the request of, and with strong input from, a newly constituted and broadly representative Mouse Users Group. The mandate of the Mouse Users Group is to ensure that the mouse users receive adequate standard of care for their research animals at the lowest cost possible. Therefore, the Mouse Users Group will be responsible for providing oversight and ensuring that the proposed changes are appropriately implemented and routinely evaluated for cost-effectiveness. The Mouse Users Group will meet on a regular basis and will be actively soliciting input from all investigators that use mice.

The planned changes will include the following:

- Improved oversight/administration of the vivarium staff by existing vivarium supervisory personnel
- Better communication between vivarium staff and mouse users with the goal of developing a more interactive partnership
- Assignment of specific staff to individual rooms for more consistent day to day care
- Reprogramming of space with advice from PIs, to better co-localize users with similar needs
- Implementation of an improved traffic/access control system (including implementation of a smart card system to better control user access to rooms/suites and prevent traffic of users from dirty to clean rooms)
- Improved training for users, including hands-on enhanced microisolator training
- Improved signage, including identification of room users on all doors
- Development of systems to facilitate sharing of animals between investigators and/or development of shared colonies of commonly used transgenics or special animals (e.g., RAGs)

- Initiation of a periodic Mouse User Group newsletter to provide user updates
- Addition of 5 new animal care technicians to improve quality of care and reduce the number of cage changes per technician per day from 300-500 to 200 (necessary for personnel retention, prevention of contamination and improved quality of service)
- A modest increase in salaries for some current animal care technicians, to ensure pay equity and facilitate retention
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive set of metrics to evaluate improvement of mouse services

### **Cost Implications of the Proposed Changes**

In order to initiate the vivarium improvements ASAP, and to raise the quality of services for all mouse users, it will be necessary to raise funds from multiple sources.

First, the proposed changes will be accompanied by the initiation of an effort to "rebalance" the operating subsidy from URSMD to the vivarium, to better reflect needs of mouse users. Currently (FY09), the operating subsidy for the vivarium is dedicated to rat users and nonhuman primate users. This reflects in part the effect of a series of major changes imposed in the recent past by USDA and NIH/DHHS that required much greater "enrichment" for nonhuman primates - significantly increasing costs. On 7/1/09, we will impose an already programmed 10% increase in costs for rat and nonhuman primate users. The released funds (roughly \$100,000) will be applied to the mouse users. Over time, we are committed to taking additional steps to strive for greater parity in terms of the operating subsidy for the vivarium, recognizing that mouse users represent the largest single group of investigators for any core at URM. C.

Second, it will be necessary to raise mouse per diems within the vivarium. It is important to note that URM. C vivarium charges have not risen in 2.5 years and are presently \$0.406 per cage per day, versus \$0.67 per cage per day among all peer institutions in the US or \$0.64 per cage per day among institutions in the Northeast (according to the 2007 Yale Survey). It is also recognized that the low per diems at URM. C are a key attraction for recruiting new faculty and are critically important for the ongoing research programs of essentially all faculty at URM. C. However, it is also equally important that quality of care for research mice at URM. C is maintained and this is not possible with the current cost structure.

A two-tiered increase in mouse per diems will be implemented to make the necessary changes within the vivarium. New hirings and equity raises will occur effective immediately, and will be funded in part by an initial 5% rate increase and in part by delaying planned renewal-and-replacement expenses in the vivarium for 6 months. Thereafter, a second increase in user costs will be needed, to ensure that this expansion of personnel and improvement of services

can be sustained.

#### PLANNED CHANGES IN USER COSTS:

1/1/09:

- 5% increase in mouse per diems, no other increases

7/1/09

- 4-8% increase in mouse per diems, depending on projected mouse census (target is 5%)
- 10% increase in costs for all other species (already programmed/announced)

Please do not hesitate to contact Jeff Wyatt for more information at 5-2651 or [jeff\\_wyatt@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:jeff_wyatt@urmc.rochester.edu). Per diems will also be discussed in addition to other topics at a town hall meeting Monday, January 5, 2009 from 1:00-2:30pm in K207. For more information specific to mouse user updates, town hall meetings and species-specific, faculty users groups, please go to our web site [www.urmc.rochester.edu/vivarium](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/vivarium).