1. Introduction

1.1. All jurisdictions stipulate that laboratory animals must receive humane care and conditions conducive to their well-being when in research facilities. Responsibilities for humane care and quality-of-life of animals in an institution rests with the Institutional Officer, the Attending Veterinarian and the AEC. However, this arrangement does not remove responsibility from the Principal Investigators who, under the supervision of the AEC, are ultimately responsible for the conditions under which animals are kept, both within and outside of the context of active experimentation or teaching, and with individuals appointed by the institution to oversee laboratory animal care.

1.2. The APCF staff are ready to assist all Faculty and users in complying with their obligations in the humane care of animals under their control and ensuring the quality-of-life of all animals maintained at HKUST.

1.3. The current mode of the daily animal management includes both animal users and APCF (versus some other institutions where such husbandries are done by vivarium staff while users are supplied with the animals until the time of data collection). Overlapping of time and location for animal manipulation by APCF and users causes a requirement for a clear division of responsibility listed in the following sections:

2. Role of APCF

2.1. APCF technicians or their delegated staff check all animal cages in APCF animal rooms every 24 hours to identify any cage/animal with problem and handle them according to their urgency.

2.2. Cases classified by the technicians as urgent are handled right away. Less urgent cases are marked accordingly for following up later, by other APCF staff or by animal users,
whoever is appropriate. Users will be notified if their actions are required. (Please see SOP C-002 Special Observation Notifications for details).

2.3. Cage/animal checking is defined as identifying problems that include, but not limited to, the following:
   2.3.1. Animals with wellbeing issues;
   2.3.2. Exceptional dirty cages, and those cages that are not in the cage changing schedule of the same day;
   2.3.3. Cages with improperly closed cage lids;
   2.3.4. Cages with shortage of water or food supply;
   2.3.5. Cages with leakage of water from bottles and flooded cage floor.

2.4. APCF technicians also check new births and record the DOB accordingly for designated cages.

2.5. Other routine husbandry procedures such as scheduled cage changing, are conducted according to the room’s weekly roster.

3. Role of animal users

3.1. Animal users are responsible to notify APCF any predicted animal wellbeing issues related to Animal Ethic Committee-approved animals experiments or certain genetic modification, so that APCF staff is able to differentiate animal wellbeing issues caused by other means and provide necessary care and/or notifying users accordingly.

3.2. Users should wean animals timely at the appropriate ages, usually at 3 weeks of age (or at 4 weeks of cage if a strain have special requirement), and separate weanlings to new cages within the regular cage capacity of the cage types being used (link here).

3.3. If users have cages containing newborns, pre-weaners or vulnerable transgenics, users mark the cages accordingly using the yellow Request Protocol Assistance card, and notify the technician in charge by email, so that APCF staff can pay extra attention to the animals’ needs, e.g. putting feed into the cage for ease of access of the young mice and for closer observation of the cage by APCF weekend staff. (Please see SOP C-002 Special Observation Notifications for details).

3.4. Users must report to APCF technical staff when animals are found sick, dead or any other unexpected animal wellbeing issues.

3.5. After any manipulation of animal cages, users should ensure the following:
   3.5.1. Proper closure of the cage lids;
   3.5.2. Filling up of food hoppers;
   3.5.3. Providing sufficient supply of drinking water, especially after setting a new cage;
   3.5.4. Making sure that newly-placed water bottles to a cage is not leaking with water;
   3.5.5. Cage cards are placed properly on the cages.
4. References

4.1. The NIH Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th edition (NIH, 2011)
4.2. Guidelines for the Care and Use of Mammals in Neuroscience and Behavioral Research, (NRC, 2001)
4.3. Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in the Care and Use of Nonhuman Animals in Research (APA, 2012)