



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

FOR US POSTAL SERVICE DELIVERY:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500, MSC 6910
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-6910
Home Page: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>

FOR EXPRESS MAIL:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500
Bethesda, Maryland 20817
Telephone: (301) 496-7163
Facsimile: (301) 480-3387

April 17, 2020

Re: Animal Welfare Assurance
A3629-01 [OLAW Case L]

Dr. Joseph Heppert
Vice President for Research and Innovation
TTU Institutional Official
Texas Tech University
Box 41075
Lubbock, Texas 79409

Dear Dr. Heppert,

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) acknowledges receipt of your April 14, 2020 letter reporting an instance of noncompliance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals at the Texas Tech University. This letter had not been preceded by a preliminary report to OLAW.

According to the information provided, this Office understands that the Texas Tech University Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) determined that instances of noncompliance occurred with respect to: one mouse found emaciated and four mice found dead/cannibalized in the same cage. The final report states that mice were received from Charles River for an investigator on March 16, 2020. On March 23, 2020 during daily health checks, the cage containing the dead mice and the emaciated mouse was discovered. After an investigation, it was determined that these deaths were due to starvation. The food hopper was never filled when the mice arrived and before placing the cage on the rack. The remaining mouse was provided hydrogel and soft chow and completely recovered. It is noted that all cages in the facility were double checked for sufficient feed in the hoppers.

The report states the importance and requirement for health checks and confirmation that animals have sufficient and accessible feed every day (unless otherwise stated in the protocol) was reiterated with the husbandry staff and addressed specifically with the employees involved. Retraining on health checks will be required for employees that allowed the empty food hoppers to go unrecognized. Trainings will be scheduled with the training coordinator as soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. In the interim, one technician will enter the facility and perform second health checks in the afternoon to confirm animals have appropriate food and water. These checks will be documented in the daily task sheets outside of each room.

It is noted this protocol is associated with PHS supported activities and the grad student had not worked with the animals. The IACUC agrees that Animal Care Services (ACS) were responsible for this oversight, and the ACS will replace the animals for the investigator. Based on its assessment of this explanation, OLAW understands that Texas Tech University has implemented appropriate measures to correct and prevent recurrences of these problems and is now compliant with provisions of the PHS Policy. We appreciate being informed of these matters and find no cause for further action by this Office.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Jacquelyn T. Tubbs, DVM
Veterinary Medical Officer
Division of Compliance Oversight
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare

cc: IACUC Contact

MEMORANDUM

April 14, 2020

TO: OLAW, AAALAC

FROM: Dr. Joseph Heppert, IO

CC: TTU IACUC;

RE: Unexpected Deaths on Protocol 19101-12

On 3/16/2020, mice were received from Charles River for (b) (6). Upon arrival, mice are provided fresh, water bottles, food, and clean bedding/nesting materials. On 3/23/2020, during daily health checks, one mouse was found severely emaciated and four others (in the same cage) were found dead/cannibalized. After investigation, it was determined that these deaths were due to starvation. The food hopper for this cage was never filled when the mice arrived and before placing the cage on the rack. The lack of food and deteriorating health of the animals went unrecognized for 7 days.

Hydrogel and soft chow of the appropriate diet was immediately placed inside the cage to supplement the remaining mouse. All other cages within the facility were also double checked for sufficient and accessible feed in the hoppers; the treated mouse has since made a complete recovery.

The importance of health checks, requirements of health checks and confirming that there is always sufficient and accessible feed for the animals every day (unless otherwise stated in the protocol) was reiterated with the husbandry staff and addressed specifically with the employees involved. Health check retraining will be required for those who allowed the empty hopper to go unrecognized. Those trainings will be scheduled with our training coordinator as soon as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. When the retraining occurs, they will be documented in the training database. In the interim, one technician will come in and perform a second set of afternoon health checks in facilities to confirm all animals are provided with sufficient and appropriate food and water each day. These checks will be documented in the daily task sheets outside of each room.

It is important to know that these mice had just completed their acclimation period at this time. Given the current COVID-19 circumstances and social distancing protocols, the graduate student had not been in the lab to work with the mice. The IACUC is in agreement that this was an Animal Care Services (ACS) oversight and that the PI is not responsible for the incident. ACS will be replacing these animals for the PI.

This protocol is associated with the following NIH grants: 5R01AI121322-05, 1R56AI119397-01A1, and 5R01AI137846-02.

Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]

From: OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2020 8:58 AM
To: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
Cc: OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)
Subject: RE: Unexpected Deaths on Protocol 19101-12

Thank you for this report, (b) (6) We will respond soon.

Axel Wolff, M.S., D.V.M.
Deputy Director, OLAW

From: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee <iacuc@ttu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2020 1:09 PM
To: AAALAC <accredit@aaalac.org>; OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD) <olawdco@od.nih.gov>
Cc: (b) (6) Heppert, Joseph <Joseph.Heppert@ttu.edu>; (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Subject: Unexpected Deaths on Protocol 19101-12

Hello,

Please see the attached memo.

(b) (6)