INVESTIGATOR GUIDELINES FOR RECORD KEEPING

Background:
Section 2.2.27 of the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (the Code) indicates that investigators and/or animal facility managers must maintain records that “will enable the AEC to verify that the welfare of animals has been monitored as agreed (in the Animal Ethics Committee Project Application)”. These records provide information that enables “critical investigation of the cause(s) of unexpected adverse events as a basis for future prevention strategies”; or, in other words, a means for developing standard operating procedures and contingency plans to avoid adverse events in future research involving animals.

The Code also stipulates that “Investigators and teachers must ensure that records of the use and monitoring of animals used for scientific purposes are maintained” (Section 3.1.9). These records for every given AEC approval should include:

- the origin and fate of animals,
- how animal welfare was assessed,
- any unexpected negative impact on animal well being,
- notations of procedures carried out on the animal/s; and
- additional information to be recorded required by the AEC.

The Code also stipulates that, “these records should be available for audit by the institution and authorized external reviewers”.

In general, the recording of information in a workbook should allow the AEC, external auditors, other investigators, animal carers, etc. to trace the use of an animal from acquisition to the conclusion of the approved protocol.

The following guidelines are a minimum standard with respect to record keeping and should not be viewed as an exhaustive list.

Record Keeping
Records should be maintained by individual researchers on administrative procedures necessary for the project, including:

- Animal Ethics Committee approval number, date and duration of approval.
- Records relating to adherence to specific conditions which the AEC may include in project approval.
- Running tally of animal use against numbers approved.
- Reports of any adverse outcomes.

Monitoring of individual animals’ passage through the protocol must be demonstrated, so each animal must be identified and have the following records attributable to it:

- Full ID (species, strain, sex, age, ID)
- Date of acquisition and source
- Place of housing
- Monitoring of health and welfare of the animal over the duration of the experiment & personnel involved (eg, records of daily monitoring, completed checklists).
- Place & date of procedure
- Identification of part of approved project conducted on each date (eg weighing, administration of agents, surgery, killing)
- Details of procedure being conducted (eg, dose rates, volumes of agents administered, surgical technique) & personnel involved.
- Details of anaesthesia if used: dose, administration, analgesia and monitoring and personnel involved.
• Records of recovery post-procedure +/- post-anaesthesia, including record of response to adverse events, predicted or not. Name(s) of personnel monitoring.
• Culling/euthanasia records including reason, method and nomination of personnel involved.

Evidence of preparation for adverse events and adherence to SOPs
• Reference to any specific SOP.
• Specification of adverse events and procedures put in place to manage these events.