

Freimann Life Science Center

Rabbit Anorexia Recording and Reporting Procedures

Purpose

A component of the daily care of the laboratory rabbit is to monitor feed intake to assure that the animal is consuming adequate amounts of feed. A rabbit will display signs of anorexia as a result of stress caused by experimental procedures, environmental factors, or disease. However, an occasional and short term partial decrease of appetite is not uncommon. Below are guidelines for tracking and recording a rabbit's eating habits and for instructions for reporting anorexic conditions to the veterinary staff.

Daily monitoring

Each morning the rabbit feeders should be checked for feed. It should be noted on the room chart if a rabbit has not eaten any of its feed. On the third consecutive morning of a rabbit having eaten no food, a Animal Illness or Injury Report should be initiated and placed on the door outside of the room, and the veterinary staff should be notified.

The water source should be checked, as rabbits will not eat if there is an inadequate water supply. Check that the rack is connected to the automatic watering system and that the sipper in the animal's cage is working properly.

It is worth noting that prolonged addition of treat items to the rabbit's diet should be avoided, as it may come to prefer those food items, thus exacerbating the lack of appetite for its regular diet.

Continued charting

After an anorectic rabbit has been brought to the attention of the veterinary staff, continue to track eating habits on the room chart **and** on the individual animal health record until the case has been resolved by the veterinary staff.