



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

February 7, 2020

Re: Animal Welfare Assurance  
#A3281-01 [OLAW Case 2L]

Dr. P. Srirama Rao  
Vice President for Research and Innovation  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Biotech One, (b) (4)  
PO Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298-0568

Dear Dr. Rao,

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) acknowledges receipt of your February 6, 2020 letter reporting an instance of noncompliance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals at Virginia Commonwealth University following up on an initial January 27, 2020 notification by telephone.

According to the information provided, this Office understands that Virginia Commonwealth University determined that instances of noncompliance occurred with respect to: the deaths of two mice due to lack of food and water. On December 28, 2019 a Division of Animal Resources (DAR) caretaker found a cage containing two dead mice. The final report states the water bottle was completely empty, and there were two food pellets on the wrong side of the hopper, making food inaccessible to the animals. The cage was labeled with a SAC card dated December 20, 2019, indicating a request for DAR staff to euthanize the animals. The caretaker stated he verified food and water levels in all cages on December 27, 2019. Investigative results revealed that DAR husbandry caretaker failed to recognize this cage for at least one day before the animals were found dead. The report states the following collective action plan will be implemented:

- 1) The DAR husbandry caretaker involved in this incident will receive individual counseling and retraining regarding proper health observation procedures, which emphasizes the importance of verifying appropriate food and water levels, including cages marked with SAC cards.
- 2) At the next DAR staff meeting all DAR staff with animal husbandry responsibilities will be apprised of this incident in order to increase awareness regarding verification of food and water in each cage.
- 3) The investigators and lab personnel will be informed to ensure animals must not be left without appropriate food and water even though the SAC card is placed on the cage. They will be instructed to develop a habit of visually checking all cages before leaving the animal room.

Documentation of retraining and DAR staff meeting will be provided to the Director of the Animal Care and Use Program. The report also states the IACUC will be advised of the above corrective actions at the next full committee meeting. It is noted that the report does not state whether these animals were involved in PHS supported animal activities.

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Based on its assessment of this explanation, OLAW understands that the Virginia Commonwealth 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



# VCU

## Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation

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P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Research and Innovation

February 6, 2020

Axel V. Wolff, M.S., D.V.M.,  
Division of Compliance Oversight  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
National Institutes of Health  
6700B Rockledge Drive  
Suite 2500, MSC 6910  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
(301) 496-7163

### **VCU Animal Welfare Assurance number D16-00180 (A3281-01)**

Dear Dr. Wolff:

Virginia Commonwealth University, in accordance with Assurance D16-00180 (A3281-01) and PHS Policy IV.F.3., provides this report of noncompliance regarding the death of two mice due to lack of water and food. Ms. Chuang, Director of Animal Care and Use Program, has discussed this with you and reported to Dr. Tubbs on January 27, 2020 via a telephone call.

#### **Description of Incident:**

On December 28, 2019, a Division of Animal Resources (DAR) caretaker found a cage containing two dead mice. The water bottle was completely empty, and there were two food pellets on the wrong side of the hopper, making food inaccessible to the animals. The cage was labeled with a SAC card dated December 20, 2019 (researchers usually place this card to request DAR staff to euthanize the animal). The caretaker stated that he had verified food and water levels in all cages on December 27, 2019. It is not possible for the animals to have survived from December 20 to December 28 with no food or water, but it is not clear when this cage was actually generated or by whom. The investigation revealed that DAR husbandry caretaker failed to recognize this cage for at least one day (December 27<sup>th</sup>) before the animals were found dead.

#### **Corrective action plan:**

- (1) The DAR husbandry caretaker involved in this incident will receive individual counseling and retraining regarding proper health observation procedures, which emphasized the importance of verifying appropriate food and water levels, including cages marked with SAC cards. Documentation of this retraining will be provided to the Director of Animal Care and Use Program and recorded in DAR's training file.

- (2) In order to minimize the possibility of a similar incident occurring in the future, at the next DAR staff meeting all DAR staff with animal husbandry responsibilities will be apprised of this incident in order to increase awareness regarding verification of food and water in each cage. Documentation and description of this meeting received during the staff meeting will be provided to the Director of Animal Care and Use Program as well as maintained in DAR's training folder.
- (3) The investigators and lab personnel will be informed to ensure animals must not be left without appropriate food and water even though the SAC card is placed on the cage. They will be instructed to develop a habit of visually checking all cages before leaving the animal room.

We regret that this incident occurred. Following our detailed investigation, we have deployed specific corrective actions to enhance our program and to minimize future occurrences. The IACUC will be advised of the above corrective actions at their next full committee meeting.

We appreciate your consideration of VCU's efforts to minimize future occurrences. VCU remains committed to animal welfare and recognizes its ethical responsibilities in ensuring the welfare of research animals and complying with the *PHS Policy* on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Research and Innovation

**Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]**

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**From:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2020 1:40 PM  
**To:** Kuei-Lan Chuang  
**Cc:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Subject:** RE: Follow-up letter (VCU Assurance# D16-00180/A3281-01)

Thanks Amy. We'll send a response soon.

Axel Wolff

**From:** Kuei-Lan Chuang <kchuang@vcu.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2020 1:26 PM  
**To:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD) <olawdco@od.nih.gov>; Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E] <wolffa@od.nih.gov>  
**Cc:** Srirama Rao <psrao@vcu.edu>; (b) (6)  
**Subject:** Follow-up letter (VCU Assurance# D16-00180/A3281-01)

Dear Dr. Wolff,

Attached please find the follow-up letter signed by Dr. Rao, VCU Institutional Official. I discussed this situation with you earlier and then reported to Dr. Tubbs by phone. The written report includes a detailed explanation of the situation and actions taken by VCU IACUC.

The ACUP leadership has reviewed this thoroughly and deployed specific corrective actions designed to enhance our animal program and to prevent future occurrences. We appreciate your consideration and VCU recognizes its responsibilities to comply with the Public Health Service Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and the Guide, and also remains committed to animal welfare.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me at (b) (6) or email to: [kchuang@vcu.edu](mailto:kchuang@vcu.edu).

Sincerely,

Amy Chuang

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*Amy*

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Amy Chuang, M.S., RQAP-GLP, CPIA  
Director for the Animal Care and Use Program (ACUP)  
Office of Research and Innovation  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298  
(b) (6)  
[kchuang@vcu.edu](mailto:kchuang@vcu.edu)

Animal Research website: <https://research.vcu.edu/secure/acup/index.htm>  
Animal Care and Use Program Blog: <http://wp.vcu.edu/acup/>



### Initial Report of Noncompliance

By: Tubbs

Date: 01/27/2020

Time: 10:37 AM

Name of Person reporting: Amy Chuang

Telephone #: (b)(6)

Fax #:

Email: Kchuang@VCU.edu

Name of Institution: VCU Univ. Virginia Commonwealth University  
Assurance number: A3281-02

Did incident involve PHS funded activity? not sure but likely

Funding component: \_\_\_\_\_

Was funding component contacted (if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

What happened?

Cage of Zmie, FD on 12/28/2019, H<sub>2</sub>O bottles empty, food on wrong side of hopper, think PI caused the issue.

Species involved: mouse

Personnel involved: researcher / animal care tech (shared responsibility)

Dates and times: Dec. 28, 2019

Animal deaths:

↳ 2

Projected plan and schedule for correction/prevention (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

AC tech has been counseled & train. PI ~~to~~ counseled as well.

Projected submission to OLAW of final report from Institutional Official:

~ 2wk

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Case # \_\_\_\_\_