

Guidelines for quarantine facilities for laboratory animals like mice, rats, rabbits and hamster imported for conducting Research and Development purposes.

The DADF is regulating import of live animals including the laboratory animals like rats, mice, rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs used for Research and Development (R&D) to prevent ingress of diseases. India has several R&D organizations/institutions carrying out research work on these imported laboratory animals.

2. These imported animals are housed in the animal house facility of the R&D organizations for which the Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision on Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has framed guidelines dated 7th January, 2010 vide June, 2005 and may be issued from time to time. These are comprehensive guidelines which provide specifications for animal handling, bio-security, breeding, feeding, quarantine, separation, stabilization and disposal of the animals. Specific details of each areas of laboratory animal facility have also been laid down in the guidelines namely "CPCSEA Guidelines for Laboratory Animal Facility" published by CPCSEA and available at https://www.aaalac.org/resources/SOP_CPCSEA.pdf.

3. Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries has issued notification vide S.O. 1495(E) dated 10th June, 2014 under Section 3 of the Livestock Importation Act, 1898 laying down the procedure and their quarantining as per health certificate condition for import of live animals including lab animal viz. rats, mice, rabbits, guinea pig used for R&D purposes. Presently, the laboratory animals are not being quarantined at Animal Quarantine and Certification Services (AQCS) stations. There is a risk of ingress of potentially dangerous organisms even through Laboratory Animals for different reasons such as wrong human handling, during transportation and other contamination. Therefore, there is a need for ensuring their post import supervision by officers of AQCSs during their quarantine at animal house facilities of R&D organizations established as per CPCSEA guidelines.

4. Therefore, in order to have effective quarantining for imported laboratory animals by the R&D organizations, these animals will be kept in the bio-secured quarantine establishment of the R&D organizations in isolation before entering into the actual laboratory facility where the quarantine officer shall have the jurisdiction to supervise the quarantine process. In this regard, the quarantine officer of DADF may inspect the premises of the R&D organization for seeing quarantine facilities as per standard established, if required.

5. To ensure quarantine of the imported animals following guidelines are further issued as a supplementary to CPCSEA guidelines:

a) On arrival, the Quarantine Officer shall initially identify the animals at the airport and verify the health certificate. Thereafter, the animals will be shifted to the facility of the R&D organization through secure container.

b) Imported animals must remain in the quarantine premises of the R&D centre for the stipulated period prescribed in the health certificate or for at least 7 days. The animals can be used for R&D purpose only after successful completion of the quarantine period.

c) During the quarantine, no transfer of animals or offspring (if any) from one facility to another should be done.

d) The quarantine officer has right to collect random samples for testing to rule out pathogens. However, if any animal under quarantine shows signs of illness, unusual behaviour or in case of disease outbreak or mortality, the quarantine officer may collect the samples for testing to establish the cause of illness or death and further follow up actions, if necessary.

e) In case of mortality during the quarantine period, incidence should also be reported to the Quarantine Officer and post mortem should be carried out mandatorily by the veterinarian of the animal house facility and the post mortem report should be made available to the quarantine officer, if required. The disposal of dead animals and their waste should be done in isolation area by adopting scientific procedures.

f) After successful completion of the quarantine for the stipulated period, the quarantine officer will issue final quarantine certificate after examining the clinical sheet and other findings, if any at quarantine period and thereafter animals should be released for R&D purposes.