

	Flinders University Safe Work Method Statement Rabbit – Sexing, Handling and Restraint 18/06/19			
				College of Medicine and Public Health Animal Facility
SWMS Number	RA Number		RA Score	
SWMS- 4.0	RA 4.0		Medium	
Contact Person	SWMS prepared by	AWC Approval Date	Review Date	
Roxanne Collingwood	Roxanne Collingwood	18/06/2019	June 2021	

Contents

The SWMS **Rabbit – Sexing, Handling and Restraint** contains the following sections:

- Legislation
 - University Policy
 - Local Policy
 - Safe Work Method Statement
 - Personal Protective Equipment Required
 - Hazards and Controls
 - Before Work Commences
 - General Information
- Handling and Restraint
- Sexing Rabbits

Legislation

- *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 8th Ed.*
- *Animal Welfare Act 1985.*
- *Animal Welfare Regulations 2012*
- [Gene Technology Act 2000](#) (the Act)
- [Gene Technology Regulations 2001](#)
- *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012*

University Policy

- Work Health and Safety Policy 2013
- Responsible Conduct of Research Policy 2016
- NHMRC Guidelines

Local Policy

Use of the College of Medicine and Public Health Animal Facilities by all staff and researchers of the College of Medicine and Public Health, Flinders University, is subject to awareness of, and adherence to the following:

Research Involving Animals:

- The University holds a licence for the use of animals for teaching and research purposes. To satisfy the requirements of the licence, anyone wishing to undertake teaching and research using animals must submit a proposal to the Animal Welfare Committee (via the Animal Ethics Review Sub-Committee. No work with animals may commence until written approval has been received from the Animal Welfare Committee. Standardised application forms for Research and Teaching can be found on the Flinders University website listed below. It is your responsibility to regularly check this site for updates to guidelines, forms etc

http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/researcher-support/ebi/animal-ethics/animal-ethics_home.cfm

-
- **All staff and students involved in animal research must complete Animal Ethics Online Training (AEOT) and must also regularly attend Animal Researcher Information Sessions (ARIS).**

Safe Work Method Statement

Refer to Risk assessments, Safe Work method Statements for chemicals, processes and plant equipment where appropriate. All projects must have an accompanying Risk Assessment signed by the Animal Facility Manager

- RA 4.0 Rabbit- Sexing, Handling and Restraint
- SWMS 4.0 Rabbit- Sexing, Handling and Restraint
- SWMS 4.1 Rabbit injection techniques
- RA 4.1 Rabbit injection techniques
- SWMS 4.4 Rabbit Anaesthesia and Analgesia
- RA 4.4 Rabbit Anaesthesia and Analgesia

Personal Protective Equipment Required

- **Gloves – to be worn throughout entire procedure**
- **Gown**
- **Mask**
- **Hair Net**
- **Shoe Covers**

Hazards and Controls

- **Animal bites- training, demonstrate competency, adhere to SWMS**
- **Animal Scratches- training, demonstrate competency, adhere to SWMS**
- **Animal Allergies- wear PPE when handling animals or handling dirty cages to stop the potential development**

Before Work Commences

Ensure that you are aware of the locations of the following:

- Spill Kit
- Fire Extinguisher
- Eye Wash
- Exits
-

Risk Assessment and SDS (Safety Data Sheet) - Ensure that you have read and understood for all the substances being used.

Equipment

- Ensure that you have read and understood the Risk Assessment and Safe Work Method Statement.
- Obtain training before using any equipment.

General Information

- All procedures are to be performed by trained competent staff.
- Training is available from senior animal house staff or Animal Welfare Officer.
- Evidence of training is available in the “Training Needs Analysis”.

Handling and Restraint

NOTE: It is essential to remember when handling a rabbit that its back legs are supported; if they are not correctly supported they can cause serious damage to their spine.

- Confidently approach the rabbit (taking care not to be bitten or scratched), firmly grasp the scruff of the neck, and as you lift the rabbit out of the cage or pen support hind quarters using your other hand (see *Photo 1*). If a rabbit is aggressive, a towel can be used to restrain the rabbit and decrease the chance of being scratched or bitten.
- Once you have removed the rabbit from the pen or cage, tuck the rabbit into the cradle of your arm. If the rabbit begins to struggle, either place it down or hold it close to your body and re-establish your hold. If the rabbit is held properly, it will feel secure and will not struggle (see *photo 2*).



Photo 1.



Photo 2.

- Alternatively, once you have removed the rabbit from the pen or the cage, place the rabbit into the base of a rat cage. Use a towel to wrap around the rabbit and hold the rabbit to stop it from jumping out (see *photo 3*).
- Rabbits can be restrained in a commercial restraint device, or wrapped up in a towel, for procedures such as injections or bleeds (see *Photo 4*).
- When returning the rabbit to its cage or pen, place the hind feet into the cage or pen first, this will prevent it from trying to jump back into the cage or pen.



Photo 3.



Photo 4.

Sexing Rabbits

- Scruff the rabbit supporting its hind quarters using the method above. Approach the genitals from behind the hocks to avoid being scratched.
- Apply gentle pressure against the external genitals.
 - **Male** - The penis will extend slightly, exposing the rounded urethral opening. The typical scrotal sack is not always obvious, especially in young males. Male rabbits also have open inguinal rings, which allow the testicles to retract into the abdomen.
 - **Female** - A slit like vulva will project while the caudal portions remain closely attached near the anus.



MALE



FEMALE

SWMS Review

This SWMS currently applies to the animals housed in the College of Medicine and Public Health Animal Facility. This SWMS will be reviewed 3 yearly, but also updated more frequently as policies, techniques and animal care requirements change.

Position	Name	Contact Details
Manager Animal Facility	Roxanne Collingwood	8204 4380 roxanne.collingwood@flinders.edu.au
Animal Welfare Officer	Lewis Vaughan	0450 424 143 awo@flinders.edu.au

Useful References

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au>

<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/internet/ogtr/publishing.nsf/Content/home-1>

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/>

http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/researcher-support/ebi/animal-ethics/animal-ethics_home.cfm

Any questions regarding the above guidelines and any technical advice/ assistance required can be directed to Animal Facility Manager.