**Personnel Policy for LAR**

Last Reviewed: January 26, 2024

**I. Laboratory Animal Resources, Facility Goals**

Laboratory Animal Resources (LAR) serves the husbandry and health needs of animals used in teaching and research at the University of Montana. It is the goal of LAR to diligently provide safe and clean living quarters, food, and water to all animal species under its care as required by federal regulations. In addition, LAR strives to provide all animals with environmental enrichment, veterinary care for illness or injury, and humane relief of pain or discomfort.

**II. Animal Care Guidelines**

Guides for animal care include the recommendations and policies of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, Public Health Service (PHS) Policy, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institutes of Health, Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC), The University of Montana Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and the medical discretion of the Attending Veterinarian (AV).

Laboratory animal technicians and technologists, animal caretakers, managers, administrative support personnel, and student workers must be dedicated to performing correctly all protocols and procedures approved by the facility manager, AV, or the IACUC. Official standard operating procedures (SOP) are those posted on the IACUC ([www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IACUC/default.php](http://www.umt.edu/research/compliance/IACUC/default.php)) or LAR ([www.umt.edu/research/LAR/default.php](http://www.umt.edu/research/LAR/default.php)) websites.

Employees of LAR will strive to follow specific instructions of principal investigators (PIs) or their designated representatives that are outlined in approved animal use protocols (AUP) or that are approved by the facility manager and/or AV. No LAR personnel has the authority to change, delete, or alter established protocols or procedures. Protocols are in place for the health and safety of both animals and personnel. Jeopardizing these standards by failing to follow established SOPs will result in discipline up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the facility manager and/or AV, and in a manner consistent with University policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

**III. Professional Deportment**  
The department of LAR is dedicated not only to providing for the safety and well-being of the animals, but also for LAR personnel, students, personnel from other departments, and contractors. The work of the department can only be achieved safely and efficiently through teamwork among all users of the LAR facilities. Professional interpersonal interactions are required for continued facility use privileges.

**A. *Interpersonal Interactions***

Build and maintain a work atmosphere of trust and respect by establishing open communication among team members, supervisors, administrators, and students.  This requires communicating professionally, positively, and effectively at all times.

1. Participate in conversations by actively listening and asking questions before  
   responding and/or negatively reacting to what you have heard.
2. Take responsibility for making sure you understand what you have heard by  
   confirming understanding (i.e. what I hear you say is……). Do not make  
   assumptions about the other person’s intent during conversations.
3. Do not gossip about co-workers or other campus employees or their motives and do not engage in negative communications which undermines others in their  
   work.
4. If you have a concern, speak respectfully and directly with the person involved.  If you feel you are not able to do this effectively, communicate with your supervisor  
   and get any support needed.
5. Take steps to prevent destructive conflict and handle conflict in an appropriate  
   manner. If you feel you are reaching a point in a conversation that may lead to  
   unprofessional behavior, respectfully inform the other individual that you would like  
   to continue the conversation after a break.  This gives you the chance to step  
   back, regroup and avoid a potentially inappropriate exchange.
6. Listen, ask questions, and understand others needs and perspectives before  
   dismissing and/or criticizing an approach. Be open to change, new ideas and ways of doing business.
7. Use professional words, normal tone of voice, and appropriate eye contact when communicating. Yelling, swearing, vulgar or aggressive behavior and physical gestures, as well as bullying and personal attacks, will not be tolerated and are not acceptable forms of communication.
8. Allow others to finish speaking without interruption before responding.
9. Recognize the value of individual differences at all levels of the organization.
10. Work effectively in a team and diverse environment by providing support and  
    assistance to team members. Be responsive and cooperative to all requests for  
    assistance. Communicate with the person making the request any impediments  
    to a timely response.
11. Refrain from openly questioning the motives of others, or of basing public  
    statements on assumptions about others’ motives.

All LAR personnel are expected to treat each other professionally and with respect. Both overt and covert efforts to create a hostile, intimidating, divisive, or unpleasant work environment will not be tolerated. A single verbal warning will be given, followed immediately by written confirmation of the verbal warning. Infractions after the verbal warning and written confirmation will result in further discipline, up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the facility manager, and in a manner consistent with University policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Interactions of LAR employees with representatives of private businesses, contractors, or regulatory or accrediting organizations are expected to be conducted with the utmost professionalism. The provision of false or misleading information, efforts to defame the University of Montana, or negative discussion of other laboratory animal facilities or their personnel will not be tolerated. Verification that any of these events have taken place will result in a single verbal warning followed by written confirmation of the verbal warning. Infractions after the verbal warning and written confirmation will result in further discipline, up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the facility manager, AV, and IACUC and in a manner consistent with University policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

**B. *Work Attire and Personal Hygiene***  
Clean scrubs are provided for use in the workplace and should not be worn or taken home. All work clothing will be laundered in HSB by LAR staff using departmental equipment and supplies. Scrubs should not be worn to offices or public areas on campus outside of LAR except as necessary in the course of walking from LAR facilities in the Health Sciences Building to the Skaggs Building or vice versa. If worn briefly to office areas outside LAR, a clean lab coat must be worn over scrubs. This policy is in place for the safety of research animals and personnel. Scrubs contaminated outside LAR can introduce animal or human pathogens into LAR facilities. Vice versa, scrubs contaminated in LAR can introduce animal or human pathogens or allergens into the home or public areas on campus.

Scrubs that are worn in non-specific pathogen-free (SPF) animal rooms should not be worn into the SPF mouse facility. Scrubs to be worn in SPF mouse rooms should be donned in the Health Sciences Building change room (009). Shoes dedicated to the workplace should be worn. Shoes must have closed toes for safety. Sandals are unacceptable.

Hats worn in non-SPF animal rooms may not be worn in the SPF mouse facility. Items used in multiple SPF rooms such as hats, headphones, portable phones, and radios should be wiped down with Peroxigard disinfectant when leaving each animal room. This policy is in place for the safety of the animals and to prevent the spread of parasite eggs, viruses, and bacteria on personnel and inanimate objects (fomites). Hands should be washed with soap and water upon exit of every animal room.

The use of tobacco products is not allowed in LAR facilities. Application of cosmetics (including lip balm), eating, and chewing gum should only be done in office areas or restrooms. This policy is intended to decrease the opportunities for transmission of animal disease to LAR staff.

Noncompliance with work attire and personal hygiene policies will result in progressive discipline. A verbal warning will be issued for the first infraction, followed by written confirmation of the verbal warning. Infractions after the verbal warning and written confirmation will result in further discipline, up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the facility manager, AV, and IACUC and in a manner consistent with University policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

**IV. AALAS Certification**  
The American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS) sponsors a standardized, national certification program for laboratory animal technicians. The purpose of the national program is to assure uniform education of laboratory animal technicians in basic principles of laboratory animal husbandry and medicine.

***A. Career Ladder***  
The University of Montana LAR provides a career ladder that includes promotion and permanent increases in base salary granted after achieving AALAS certifications, meeting acceptable performance standards, and accepting responsibility commensurate with the target position. The cost of study materials, registration for the first attempt at certification examinations, and the cost of transportation to testing facilities is paid by LAR.

**B.  *Responsibilities Accompanying AALAS Certification***  
Technicians who have achieved AALAS certifications are expected to apply this theoretical knowledge on a practical level in the workplace. For instance, a technician with ALAT certification should understand basic principles of designing scientific experiments and should know, without being told, that it is inappropriate to house animals of different experimental groups in the same primary enclosure, especially without the approval of the PI and the AV. Laboratory animal technicians will be held accountable for their decisions to the level of their training and experience. Laboratory animal technicians certified at any level who make independent decisions that have negative or potentially negative consequences on a research project will be disciplined. A single verbal warning will be given, followed immediately by written confirmation of the verbal warning. Infractions after the verbal warning and written confirmation will result in further discipline, up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction, at the discretion of the facility manager and in a manner consistent with University policy and applicable collective bargaining agreements

**V. Attendance, Breaks, and Lunch**  
Employees of LAR are expected to follow their assigned schedules for reporting to work. Once at work, LAR employees are expected to focus on their jobs. Personal errands, appointments, and phone calls will be handled during break or lunch periods and should not interfere with job performance. Personal long distance phone calls and long-distance fax transmissions cannot be made from LAR phones and fax machines.

**A. *Tardiness***  
Arrival at work 10 minutes or more after the scheduled arrival time is considered mild tardiness. Mild tardiness will be tolerated once annually based on the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Future mild tardiness will result in progressive discipline of a verbal warning, then a written warning, followed by suspension without pay or termination. Unexcused tardiness in excess of one-half an hour is considered severe tardiness and will automatically result in a written warning, and a second severe offense will result in further discipline, up to and including termination. In addition, any employee with unexcused tardiness in excess of one-half hour after accumulating a verbal or written warning for mild tardiness will receive further discipline, up to and including termination depending on the severity of the infraction.

Tardiness may be excused if the employee calls the facility manager (243-4892) or the IACUC manager (243-6395) with an acceptable excuse. Excuses for tardiness include those accepted for sick leave by the University of Montana personnel policy, mass transit delays, traffic delays caused by accident or inclement weather, electrical outages, and car trouble. Personal vehicle malfunction will be accepted as an excuse no more than twice annually.

***B. Attendance***

1. Sick Leave   
Employees are expected to work their assigned schedules. Absences for illness or family emergencies should be called to the facility manager (243-4892) or IACUC manager (243-6395) as soon as possible. Acceptable absences for sick leave are consistent with the University of Montana personnel policy. Absences for routine physician or therapist appointments should be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance and documented by a written note from the doctor or therapist to be submitted to the Facility Manager within 1 week after the appointment. Emergency appointments must be documented by a written note from the doctor, or therapist to be submitted to the facility manager within 1 week after the appointment.

Sick leave absences of 3 or more consecutive days require documentation of illness by a physician to be submitted to the Facility Manager within 1 week of the illness. Habitual requests, defined as a frequency of once every other month or more, for 1 to 2 days of sick leave will require documentation by a physician of illness after the first 2 occurrences.

2. Leave Without Pay

Leave without pay (LWP) will not be granted without prior approval and only in situations where no sick leave is available or by HR approval.

3. Annual Leave

Requests for annual leave and compensatory time usage must be submitted at least 48 hours in advance and are granted approval at the discretion of the facility manager. No more than 3 weeks of leave can be taken at one time. No leave time will be approved for the month prior to any AAALAC site visit. Veterinary appointments for family pets will be approved as annual leave.

**C. *Breaks and Lunch***  
Once arriving at work, employees are entitled to breaks and lunch periods based on the number of hours of their scheduled work shift as described below. Breaks and lunch periods must be scheduled into the regular workday.

1. 10 hours: two separate 15 min. breaks and a 1-hour lunch. A 6:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
   schedule allows for these breaks.  Lunch is scheduled from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
2. 7-8 hours: two separate 15 min. breaks and a1 hour lunch break. An 8 a.m. to  
   4 p.m (7 hr. day) or 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (8 hr. day) schedule allows for these breaks.  
   Lunch is scheduled from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Two fifteen-minute breaks are  
   scheduled at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
3. 5-6 hours: two separate 10 min. breaks and a 30 min. lunch. An 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
   (5 hr. day) or 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (6 hr. day) schedule allows for these breaks.
4. < 5 hours: one 15 min. break and no lunch

Failure of the employee to use a scheduled lunch period does not qualify the employee for overtime.

**D. *Weekend Assignments***  
All full-time permanent personnel will be assigned weekend duties by the facility manager on a rotational basis. Trading weekend assignments between or amongst employees should be done at least 48 hours in advance and by mutual agreement between the trading parties and management. The change of assignments will be communicated to the facility manager in writing. Disputes concerning weekend assignments will be resolved by the facility manager. Holiday assignments will be made on a rotating basis and cannot be traded or changed without the permission of the facility manager.

**VI. Compensation Beyond Regular Work Hours**

***A. Overtime***  
Overtime pay for holiday and weekend assignments of 5 hours or less per employee per day is pre-approved by the facility manager and will be the routine compensation for overtime work. Any other accrual of overtime pay must be approved in advance by the facility manager either verbally or in writing.

***B. Compensatory Time***  
Compensatory time may be accrued in lieu of overtime pay by mutual consent between the employee and the facility manager. Compensatory time should be used within 2 pay periods of accrual unless specifically arranged with the facility manager. Specific dates for the use of compensatory time should be determined by mutual agreement between the employee and the facility manager before accrual of compensatory time.

**VII. Discipline**  
Progressive discipline is the process of applying punishment of increasing intensity over time. For example, a verbal warning for mild tardiness might be followed by a written warning, then possibly suspension, then possibly termination if the tardy behavior continued. Progressive discipline will be used in all except the most egregious of circumstances, as outlined below.

When discipline is warranted, work activities may be restricted and the level of daily supervision increased commensurate with the level of discipline achieved and the severity of the infraction.

* *Verbal warnings*will result in a short-term (1-2 weeks) increase in supervision to ensure that additional infractions do not occur. Work activities will not be altered.
* *Written warnings* will result in a mid-range (2-12 weeks) and a moderately enhanced increase in supervision to ensure that progress is being made in work performance. One or more follow-up counseling sessions may be used to document progress. Work activities may be reduced to the primary priorities of the position in order to focus on improving work performance issues.
* *Suspensions* will result in a long-term (3-12 months) and markedly enhanced increase in daily supervision to ensure that work performance inadequacies do not jeopardize the health and welfare of animals or co-workers. One or more follow-up counseling sessions will be used to document progress. Work activities will be reduced to only the primary priorities of the position in order to allow the employee to focus on improving work performance issues.

Discharge is the ultimate form of progressive discipline and is used in situations when other forms of disciplinary action fail to remove or correct the problem or it may be used as the first and only step of discipline in response to the most serious types of offenses. A discharge may be appropriate in situations including but not limited to the following:

* Endangering or threatening the health or safety of others, either directly or by failing to follow the established safety procedures and protocols of LAR
* Using alcohol or illegal drugs on university property or during work hours or reporting for duty under the influence thereof
* Falsifying official records
* Unauthorized absence from work in excess of five days
* Using or authorizing another to use any state-owned or leased vehicle or other property for other than official purposes
* Physical violence or fighting on the employer’s premises
* Brandishing any firearm or weapon on the employer’s premises
* Immoral or indecent conduct on the employer’s premises
* Serious or pervasive sexual harassment
* Theft
* Willful destruction or abuse of the employer’s or another employee’s property or materials
* Failure to maintain a valid and current MT driver’s license or other professional licenses when required to perform job duties.