

**POLICY ON THE USE OF TOE CLIPPING
FOR ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION**

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* recognizes that there are many acceptable methods by which to identify research animals. Among those methods are: room, rack, pen, stall, and cage cards with written or bar code information; collars, bands, plates, and tabs; colored stains; ear notches or ear tags; tattoos; subcutaneous transponders; and freeze brands. Toe clipping (removal of the first bone of certain toes corresponding to a predetermined numbering code), as a method of identification of small mammals, should be used only when no other individual identification method is feasible.

The University of Virginia IACUC acknowledges that under certain circumstances the technique of toe clipping for the purpose of animal identification may be necessary, but in general, strongly discourages the practice. The IACUC regards toe clipping as a potentially painful procedure that should be conducted only with prior approval from the IACUC. The Principal Investigator must provide to the IACUC scientific justification in his/her animal use protocol that no other methods of marking the animal are feasible. The Principal Investigator must conduct the toe clipping in the most painless and humane manner and agree to use methods of anesthesia and antisepsis as directed by the IACUC or veterinarians. Should an acceptable alternative method of animal identification become available in the future, the Principal Investigator should examine that method for feasibility and make every effort to eliminate the technique of toe clipping.

References:

1. *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*
2. NIH Office of Animal Care and Use