



TITLE: Farm Cat Husbandry and Veterinary Care

SOP Category: Husbandry

RUAC SOP #: 7.25

Page: 1 of 4

Effective Date: 04/22/2025

Approval:

David C. Reiner DVM

Revisions: 11/04/2021, 4/14/2025

SCOPE:

This document describes the procedures to be followed in providing care to domestic farm cats maintained at the New Jersey Agricultural Experimental Station, Rutgers University, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) Cook Campus Farm Facility. Cats enrolled in this program are maintained by the University as part of the integrated pest management program (IPMP) used at the farm. These cats are not considered as pets and not to be used as research subjects.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the procedures outlined is to ensure that farm cats receive appropriate housing, feeding and veterinary care.

PROCEDURES:

Processing of cats and enrollment in the IPMP

Prospective cats will be identified and captured by the Farm Manager or designee. If not physically present and highly visible for at least 10 days prior to capture, for behavioral and neurological assessment, prospective cats will be quarantined at either the farm or at RUAC for no less than 10 days.

- **Initial Exam** - Cats are examined for evidence of disease, injury, or aversive disposition. The body weight is logged, and a fecal parasite evaluation is performed on a suitable sample when presented. The presence or absence of male reproductive organs is established.
- **Gonadectomy** - Cats that are determined to be acceptable for enrollment in the program will be spayed or neutered by RUAC veterinarians or through an external licensed veterinarian.
- **Permanent identification** - While anesthetized, cats may receive an ear tattoo, composed of a unique identifier such as the year of enrollment followed by a sequential number in one ear and CAC representing Cook Animal Care ownership in the opposite ear, or may receive a subcutaneous microchip identification. This



TITLE: Farm Cat Husbandry and Veterinary Care

SOP #: 7.25

Page 2 of 3

permanent identification will be documented in the animal permanent health record maintained by RUAC.

- A microchip reader may be temporarily obtained from one or more of the animal science or life science departments as needed.
- **Vaccination** - Cats will receive a Rabies vaccine administered subcutaneously in the right rear limb annually or as per labeled vaccine, and an initial Feline Distemper vaccine FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia) series if no documentation available of previous series completion. The evaluation for and vaccination against other disease processes such as Feline leukemia will not be mandatorily performed but may be performed at the discretion of the Veterinary Staff.
- **Deworming** – Cats may receive an annual dose of oral anthelmintic or topical anthelmintic.
- **Placement or barn / care unit assignment and acclimation** - Following the immediate postoperative recovery period and at the discretion of the Veterinary staff, the cat(s) will be transferred to the specific barn or care unit and maintained in a large portable cage for a period of no less than 1 week as a means to acclimate the cat to the new environment, while at the same time acclimating the cat to the presence and activity of people and establishing a known location for food and water access. Participation in the IPMP once released to the barn or farm unit is strictly voluntary on the part of the individual cat.

Routine Husbandry - Daily Observation and Duties

- **Visual evaluation** - In general, IPMP cats naturally establish a specific territory which they patrol daily. The territory often overlaps human work areas, allowing CAC staff to observe or interact with the cats daily. If cats are observed to have a medical issue, the cat is captured and temporarily housed in a closed ventilated room or transport cage. The Farm Manager is notified of the issue and is primarily responsible for communicating the problem to the Veterinary staff.
- **Problem based evaluations and care** - The Veterinary staff, when notified of a potential animal health problem, will evaluate the animal in a timely fashion and/or the cat may be transported to a local veterinary clinic for evaluation. Treatment and care plans will be prescribed as needed and implemented. Evaluation and treatment plans will be documented in the individual's health record. It is the responsibility of CAC staff to administer treatments as prescribed.
- **Daily Feeding** - Dry cat food will be provided at each respective barn or farm unit to supplement caloric needs when necessary. CAC staff will be



TITLE: Farm Cat Husbandry and Veterinary Care

SOP #: 7.25

Page 3 of 3

responsible for ensuring that the cats have access to fresh clean food within the barn or farm unit.

- **Daily Watering** - The farm environment provides many sources for freely accessible potable water. Water will be provided at each respective barn or farm. CAC staff will be responsible for ensuring that the cats have access to fresh clean water within the barn or farm unit.



Preventative Health Program

- At least one time per year, cats should be collected for annual health examinations. Some cats may require humane trapping (ex Havahart®). Some cats may require humane trapping temporarily until a physical examination can be performed. Following the examination, the animal will either be released or safely returned to its home environment. Confirmation of animal identification will be made.

Emergency Care

- The Veterinary staff will respond to any reported IPMP cat emergent health issues. A recommendation for appropriate care and treatment will be made to the Farm Manager which may include referral to local veterinary clinic or hospital. The Farm manager, in conjunction with the recommendation of the Veterinarian reserves final treatment and or euthanasia decision.

Euthanasia

- If an IPMP cat's health condition requires euthanasia, euthanasia will be administered by the Veterinary staff in accordance with the acceptable methods described in the most recent version of the AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia.

Feral Cat Identification

- Any cat not known to be an active and current participant in the IPMP, seen and subsequently captured on the Cook Farm property will be:
 - confirmed as feral, by absence of permanent ear tattoo or other identification.
 - removed from the property by a contract wildlife control or municipal animal control agency or evaluated for enrollment in the IPMP program.

REFERENCES: NONE