Terms of Reference

FELASA working group on the revision of the recommendations for the health monitoring

Background

The actual version of the Recommendations for the health monitoring of rodent and rabbit colonies in breeding and experimental units was completed in June 2001. The preamble states that these recommendations will be under periodical review and amendments will be published as necessary.

In the meantime, sciences evolved, new methodologies were investigated and new organisms are considered to be relevant for health screening. New assessments were made if certain organisms have to be regarded as pathogenic or not.

The current recommendations have the assumption that a person with sufficient understanding of the principles of health monitoring be in charge to maintain a health monitoring policy for the facility. Unfortunately current developments show that in more and more institutions persons without these qualifications become responsible for managing animal units.

Tasks, proposed line of work

The working group will revise the current recommendations. Flexibility to react on new developments in evolving scientific knowledge shall be maintained, as well as flexibility for individual and local needs. Literature references shall be actualized.

A strong link to the accreditation of health monitoring schemes shall be established.

The revised recommendations for the health monitoring will be basis for the accreditation of health monitoring schemes and should suit this purpose. Similarly, a link to the accreditation system for diagnostic labs should be indicated and defined.

The working group shall identify specific needs for revision. The following proposals shall only serve as initial thoughts and give some ideas, they are not defined tasks or decisions:

- Focus on recommendations for mice and rats. Make proposal if and in which form other species like rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, degus, cats, dogs, pigs, primates shall be included in this or in other FELASA recommendations.
- Consider to describe two animal categories: immunocompetent and immunodeficient
- Describe procedures for facultative pathogens (opportunistic agents?) and their importance
Define and describe the term “unit”. Consider differences between barrier systems, e.g. open systems, classical barriers, filter top cages, IVC,… and their influence on the number of sentinels.

Describe practical solutions for colonies with a high number of microbiological units, e.g. IVC

Challenge and if needed defend the sample size, actually at least 10 animals per unit; and sampling frequency

Consider to include considerations on diagnostics on intercurrent unexpected cases of disease or death.

Make precisions for the identification of parasites

Challenge and describe the role of pathology

Propose an easy to use approach that is understandable and feasible also for persons that are not FELASA cat. D experts. Maintain and do not give up the flexibility and the necessity to adapt programs to local needs, a complexity that requires persons with sufficient understanding.

**Composition of the working group**

A working group of 5-6 members from FELASA member organisations will be formed. A mix between the members of the previous working group and new members shall be in place. Microbiologists with experience in laboratory animals, animal facility managers and breeders’ scientists shall be represented.

**Budget**

Budget 15’000 Euro for telephone conferences and travelling.

**Deadline**: Two years after starting (suggested:)