

Multiple Survival Surgical Procedures

Background

Surgical procedures are categorized as major or minor and can be further subdivided into survival and non-survival. A survival surgery is defined as any surgical procedure in which the animal is allowed to recover from anesthesia. A major surgical procedure is defined as surgery which penetrates and exposes a body cavity, produces substantial impairment of physical or physiologic function, or involves extensive tissue dissection or transection. A minor surgery does not expose a body cavity and causes little or no physical impairment. Laparoscopic procedures and some procedures associated with neuroscience research may be classified as major or minor surgery, depending on their impact on the animal. This designation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Veterinarian and IACUC based on the description of the procedure, as well as the anticipated or actual consequences of the surgery. This classification may be changed depending on the actual clinical outcome of a procedure. According to the Guide, “Multiple major surgical procedures on a single animal are acceptable only if they are 1) essential components of a single research project or protocol, 2) scientifically justified by the investigator or 3) necessary for clinical reasons.”

Policy

The IACUC, in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, discourages, but may permit, multiple major survival surgeries on a single animal if justified for scientific reasons by the investigator and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Survival surgeries done at the vendor will count towards multiple survival surgeries. Some procedures categorized as minor may induce substantial postoperative discomfort and should similarly be described and scientifically justified in the protocol if performed multiple times on the same animal.

Examples of justification include surgeries that are interrelated components of one project or multiple surgeries that conserve a scarce animal resource (for example, rare or protected species). This policy does not apply to veterinary care procedures involving major survival surgeries performed by the attending veterinarian or his/her designee. Such procedures may be performed as routine veterinary care (i.e., cesarean section) or to protect the health of the animal in an emergency.