9.0641 IACUC Toe Clipping Policy
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

POLICY STATEMENT
The 8th edition of the Guide for Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (the Guide, NRC 2011) states: “As a method of identification in small rodents, toe-clipping should be used only when no other individual identification method is feasible.” (p. 75.) Toe clipping must be adequately scientifically justified in an approved IACUC protocol prior to use.

REASON FOR POLICY
The GRU IACUC is responsible for overseeing humane care and use of animals used in research and teaching and for ensuring adherence to regulatory expectations in the Public Health Service (PHS) Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and the Animal Welfare Act as well as standards contained in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The purpose of this policy is to educate personnel in proper technique to ensure humane treatment of animals receiving the toe clip procedure.

AFFECTED STAKEHOLDER AND ORGANIZATION(S)
Any employee, student, contractor, or external consultant involved in animal use at GRU.

DEFINITIONS
- **Applicable Species**
  - Mice
  - Rats
- **Hallux** - ‘dew claw’ or ‘little toe’ or ‘thumb’
- **Toe clipping** - A method for genotyping and/or identification of small rodents; the practice of removing the toe from the most distal joint to the tip of the toe; removal of the last phalangeal (toe) bone of a digit from one or more limbs corresponding to a predetermined numbering code

PROCESS & PROCEDURES
Toe-clipping is a potentially painful procedure and is allowed as a method of identification only when the research objective or aims involve experimental manipulation of neonatal mice up to 7 days of age. Recent publications suggests it may be the preferred method for neonatal mice up to 7 days of age, as it appears to have few adverse effects on behavior and well-being at this age (Castelhano-Carlos et al. 2010; Schaefer et al. 2010). This procedure should be implemented with caution in animals used for behavioral research. Studies have demonstrated decreased grip strength in toe-clipped animals depending on the age at which the toes were removed.

**Toe clipping is not allowed as a method for identification for rodents over 7 days of age.** Ear punch, implantation of microchips, tattooing or ear tags are acceptable methods of identification for rodents over 7 days of age.

**Toe Clipping Procedure:**
1. Rodent pups should be held in gloved hands.
2. Toes to be clipped should be cleaned with 70% alcohol and aseptic practices used.
3. One toe may be removed from three feet only.
4. Do not remove more than one toe per foot, and do not cut the small most medial/inner toe (hallux/dew-claw).
5. Sterilized, very sharp scissors with fine pointed tips work well for this purpose.
6. The instrument should be re-sterilized after every 5 animals.
7. Bleeding should be immediately controlled by gentle fingertip pressure.
8. Pups should be quickly returned to their dams. Cages containing toe clipped neonates should be checked 5 minutes after toe removal to confirm complete hemostasis.

This procedure can be done without anesthesia. Exceptions to the maximum age of animal will not be granted.

FORMS AND RELATED DOCUMENTS
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Approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee on 21 August 2014.

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE

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David W. Stepp, Ph.D. Date
Chairman Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Georgia Regents University

TO BE USED BY THE OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE & ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT

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