Edmund Barton Building Barton ACT
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601
ph +61 2 6272 4465 fax +61 2 6272 3399
www.affa.gov.au

Department of
AGRICULTURE
FISHERIES &
FORESTRY -
AUSTRALIA

ABN 24 113 085 695

File: 01/15426

13 March 2003

ANIMAL BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2002/06

LABORATORY RATS AND MICE AND THEIR GENETIC MATERIAL FINALISATION OF THE REVIEW OF IMPORT REQUIREMENTS

This Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) advises stakeholders of the outcome of the review of existing conditions for importation of laboratory rats and mice and their genetic material. The new conditions (at Attachment A) come into effect from today.

Revised conditions for the importation of live laboratory rats and mice were established in 1998. Since then, interest in the importation of highly specialised strains of laboratory rats and mice prompted a review of those conditions to examine the importation of genetic material from the same species. In conducting the review, Biosecurity Australia considered it appropriate also to review the diseases of significance in the importation of live laboratory rats and mice.

The review commenced with discussions with experts from a number of Australian research institutions. Input from those experts led to the development of a discussion paper which was circulated on 26 August 2002 together with draft revised conditions for importation of laboratory rats and mice and their genetic material (ABPM 2002/41).

The two main issues raised by respondents were the risk management measures for ectromelia virus and the requirement that eligible institutions have an "Animal Ethics Committee". A summary of these issues follows:

Ectromelia virus

Several respondents questioned the reason for inclusion of ectromelia virus as an agent of quarantine concern. This virus is not a zoonotic agent and from that point of view, the consequences of an incursion are less significant than for several other infectious agents of laboratory rats and mice.

Biosecurity Australia took these comments into account, and assessed the nature of disease (mouse pox) caused by this virus, as well as the widespread and heightened awareness of the disease amongst laboratory animal experts, the improved tests and increased routine testing of colonies since outbreaks in the early 1980s, together with the pattern of the disease. As a result Biosecurity Australia considers testing of the source colony for ectromelia virus is not necessary and that an appropriate risk management measure is certification that there has been no clinical or other evidence of ectromelia virus in the colony of origin during the 12 months preceding export or collection of embryos.

***Bona fide* scientific institutions**

Several respondents questioned the wording used in the draft conditions regarding importation into premises that are under the supervision of an "Animal Ethics Committee". Respondents pointed out that there are *bona fide* Australian scientific institutions that do not have Animal Ethics Committees, eg those which breed and supply animals without actually conducting research. In order to encompass such situations, the pertinent parts of the conditions have been amended to read:

> "premises which are recognised by AQIS as *bona fide* scientific premises, usually as evidenced by the existence of an 'Animal Ethics Committee' or equivalent arrangements".

Certification by the veterinary authorities of the exporting country that the premises of origin fulfil similar conditions has also been included in the conditions.

Next Steps

The attached conditions come into effect from the date of this memorandum.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer (details below).

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1988*, all submissions received in response to ABPMs will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

DAVID BANKS
General Manager
Animal Biosecurity

Contact Officer:	Pat Boland
Telephone no:	(02) 6272 4859
Facsimile no:	(02) 6272 3399
E-mail:	pat.boland@affa.gov.au