

Memorandum

To: MBL Course Directors and PIs

From: Alan M. Kuzirian, PhD
MBL IACUC Chair

Date: 22 May 2007

Subject: Use of Fertile Bird Eggs

Over the past few years, and culminating with events of last year, the MBL IACUC has had a problem administering and supervising the ordering and use of fertile bird eggs. Often times, the numbers requested have large margins of error, erring on the excessive number side. Subsequently, this has necessitated the wholesale euthanasia of many dozens of unused eggs or the unauthorized transfer of surplus eggs to others. In addition, the presence of large numbers of unused fertile eggs has often led to unanticipated hatching of chicks; the reason why the MBL requires an IACUC protocol for their use. These hatchings often occur in unattended incubators resulting in the animals being physically maimed, unwatered and unfed. Again, the result of these situations is the necessity for euthanasia. Even more regrettable, and illegal, are the occasions when hatched chicks have been removed from the lab and kept as pets.

The IACUC is well aware of the variability in viability of fertile eggs and the likelihood that shipments are lost or damaged. These situations do negatively impact on planned lab exercises and research protocols that have very tight margins for errors in scheduling. However, in order to address the untenable situation of past years, we will be monitoring fertile egg use this summer.

All 2007 protocols using fertile eggs (MBL courses and research applications) will carry the requirement that Weekly Animal Care Sheets be used. A daily tally of eggs will be required so that everyone will know exactly how many eggs were ordered, the date, how many are on hand on any given day, and at what stage of development they are. The MBL's Veterinarian will check these sheets and the animal care coordinators will monitor egg-use versus number of eggs ordered. It is anticipated that this new practice will prevent or greatly retard the overages of unnecessary eggs and their needless destruction, both now and in the future. It should also facilitate keeping track of the age of the eggs and thus prevent unanticipated hatchings and the possibility of injuries to unattended chicks.

Your cooperation as PIs, Course Directors, and all others associated with the courses will be greatly appreciated. This is a serious matter. The MBL IACUC must be able to defend its policies and practices during our annual USDA Inspection. The situation as it has existed in the past is really not adequate or defensible, and must be changed and improved.

Thank you,