Use of Postoperative Analgesia

Policy: Postoperative analgesia must be administered for at least 48 hours following completion of survival surgery unless scientific justification to withhold analgesia is provided by the investigator and approved by the IACUC.

Rationale: Providing appropriate pain relief is a primary ethical responsibility of the animal care and use program. As stated in the IRAC Principles (1):

IV. Proper use of animals, including the avoidance or minimization of discomfort, distress, and pain when consistent with sound scientific practices, is imperative. Unless the contrary is established, investigators should consider that procedures that cause pain or distress in human beings may cause pain or distress in other animals.

V. Procedures with animals that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress should be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia, or anesthesia.

Procedures, Guidelines, and Exceptions:
1. Pain-relieving methods, including non-pharmacological means, should be described in Proposals using procedures for post-procedural pain should be expected.

2. The selection of appropriate analgesics should reflect professional veterinary judgment, and should be considered for all surgical manipulations (2). The need for postoperative analgesia following non-surgical procedures will be ascertained on a case-by-case basis by the IACUC.

3. Preemptive analgesia (the administration of preoperative and intraoperative analgesia) enhances intraoperative patient stability and optimizes postoperative care and well-being by reducing postoperative pain, and should be strongly encouraged during major survival surgical procedures (2).

4. Depending on the procedure, postoperative analgesia may be necessary beyond 48 hours and should be carefully gauged by frequent observation for clinical signs of pain and distress.

References: