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Effingerstrasse 15, PO BOX

3001 Bern

www.swissuniversities.ch

SAFN facilities management during COVID-19 crisis

Members of the SAFN are doing their utmost to maintain the safety and welfare of the facilities staff and research animals during this challenging time.

The necessary measures to react to the COVID-19 crisis led to massive reduction of research activities. This has a large impact on the animal facilities. While access is restricted for researchers, all SAFN facilities continue their necessary operations to assure animal welfare. The following measures have been put in place in SAFN facilities to ensure protection of the staff and animal welfare, as well as to maintain essential core activities:

- Stop of importation of new animals, unless related to research on SARS-CoV-2
- Reduction of breeding to the indispensable minimum
- No initiation of new projects involving animals, unless related to research on SARS-CoV-2
- Maintenance of selected ongoing experiments

Decisions on specific requests are made on a case-by-case basis, considering different parameters including staff requirement, timing, complexity and comprehensive harm/benefit assessment. The overall strategy is mindful of allowing activities to pick up as swiftly as possible at the end of the COVID-19 crisis.

Regular exchanges between the SAFN, the Swiss Animal Welfare Officers Network (AWO-N) as well as the animal experimentation division of the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office additionally help to identify and implement coordinated measures in the facilities of the Swiss universities during this crisis period.

Contact:

Anne Planche

Swiss Animal Facilities Network (SAFN) coordinator

safn@swissuniversities.ch