**The Aga Khan University**

**Office of Research and Graduate Studies**

**Request Form to initiate/reinstate/continue research duringCOVID-19 Pandemic**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Name of PI:
 |       | 1. Designation:
 |       |
| 1. Department:
 |       | 1. Entity:
 |       |
| 1. Email:
 |       | 1. Contact #
 |       |

1. Project Title:

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| --- |
|       |

1. Purpose of research/field work:

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| --- |
|       |

1. Activities involved in research/field work:

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1. Does your study involve collection of biological samples (respiratory/urine/feces /environmental)? If yes, have you taken a fresh approval from Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) for risk assessment of such samples during COVID-19 pandemic?

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1. Location of field work (if applicable and please specify if it includes over-night stay)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Place(s) of Visit | Duration (hours) | Frequency per week | No. of persons | No. of Vehicle |
|       |       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |       |

1. Duration of research/field work:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Start Date: |       | End Date: |       |

1. Why is it necessary to continue research/field work during COVID-19 pandemic? Explain briefly about time sensitivity or critical nature of the field research (200 words max)

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1. What steps will be taken to mitigate risk of COVID-19 exposure? Describe your ability to comply with physical distancing and hygiene protocols as required by Public Health in the area where you are working during all aspects of the field research activities (200 words max)

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1. Have you obtained necessary approvals (for off-campus research)? (please attach copies)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Approvals | Yes/No/NA | If No, state reason |
| 1. District commissioner / Union Council
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |
| 1. Public/Private Hospital/Clinic administration (if applicable)
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |

1. Have you taken following AKU departments on board? (please attach copies)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Approvals | Yes/No/NA | If No, state reason |
| 1. Safety and Security (for off-campus)
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |
| 1. Transport
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |
| 1. CTU (for clinical trials)
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |
| 1. ECACU (if applicable)
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |
| 1. Juma Lab (if applicable)
 | **[ ] [ ] [ ]**  |       |

1. What measures are planned to deal with COVID related emergencies?

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Note: The signature of Principal Investigator verifies;

* thorough review of COVID-19: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for continuation of research (attached)
* thorough review and validity of above content.
* obtained consent from department chair to initiate/reinstate/continue his/her research work.
* compliance with entity specific Employee Safety Checklist
* written undertaking from all AKU employees involved in field activities has been obtained as specified in the SOPs

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PI Signature: |  | Date: | -- . |

1. Entity Head/Associate Dean/Entity Research Lead recommendation:

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| --- |
|  |
| Name and Sign: |  | Date: | -- . |

**The Aga Khan University**

**Ethics Committee for Animal Care & Use**

**Addendum for Animal-related work (v3)**

ECACU approval number:       or Applied [ ]

Description of the nature of animal work *is given* in Item 9 above [ ]

Physical presence of animal facility staff is required for assistance in the work: No[ ]  Yes[ ]

If yes, describe nature, frequency and duration:

Required additional documents are attached*(skip if ECACU approval is pending)*:

ECACU approved protocol [ ]

ECACU application form (approved version) [ ]

ECACU approval letter [ ]

The PI agrees that:

Necessary PPEs will be provided by PI to the project personnel working with animals [ ]

All project personnel have medical coverage Yes [ ]  No [ ]  Comment

PI, and all project personnel working with animals agree to share daily COVID-19 screening result with Coordinator and Veterinarian, Animal facility, and abide by their decision on permitting them to work in the facility [ ]

Animals suspected to have COVID-19 and their cage mates will be euthanized [ ]

SOPs/guidelines by ECACU will be strictly followed in order to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 between personnel and laboratory animals. [ ]

If guidelines are not followed or PPE are incorrectly used, and a researcher becomes COVID-positive, the exposed animals will be euthanized to prevent potential colonization[ ]

**The Aga Khan University**

**Ethics Committee for Animal Care & Use**

**INITIATING/REINSTATING/CONTINUING USE OF ANIMALS FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Version 1.0 15-June-2020

**Request to initiate/reinstate/continue laboratory animal-based work:**

* Requests for starting or restarting animal research should be submitted by filling the official application form from Office of Research and Graduate Studies and sending soft copy by email to ECACU admin (ecacu@aku.edu ).

Please fill the whole form; however, some important suggestions are as follows:

Please ensure that you mention:

1. Summary of nature of animal work in question 8, 9 and 10
2. Whether your research assistant has a medical coverage from AKU or not (in question 17) and if they will be provided with respirator masks or not by principal investigator PI (in question 14)

Additional information required in your request email is as follows:

* + Is assistance required from animal facility staff along, and if so, the nature and duration of assistance
	+ ECACU Approval Number
	+ ECACU Approval Letter
	+ ECACU-approved Protocol

*NOTE: Your submission of the form will be taken as an agreement to abide by University and ECACU SOPs (which will be made available on ECACU website)*

This email will be forward to Chair ECACU and Chair Animal Facility Committee (veterinarian) along all required documents mentioned above. They will re-evaluate the request from the perspective of biosafety and biosecurity of animal facility staff, researcher and animals. If no unusual risks are identified, an approval along with its duration will be communicated to the principle investigator of the project.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Animal Research Work in Animal Facility**

**Animal Facility Staff and Researchers:**

ECACU endorses the University’s guidance on safe practices to fulfill research commitments and has developed the following SOPs to enable a safe working environment for people working in the AKU animal facility. For the safety of all individuals working in animal facility following measures have been put in place for staff and researchers:

**Sehat Check App and online Infectious Disease Reporting System**

1. All staff and researchers are requested to download the Sehat check app from Apple Store or Google play. If users do not have a not have smartphones, the web version is available at: idrs.aku.edu.
2. Use this application or web version of Infectious Disease Reporting System to undergo online screening as per employee health protocol at AKU at the start of each work day and submit the report by email to Mr. Tahir Rauf (Coordinator, Animal Facility) at tahir.rauf@aku.edu. If further testing is recommended as per above screening, staff and user should not enter the animal facility and take care of their health as per directions of the university.
3. Please do not come to the animal facility if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 which include fever, dry cough, headache and body aches or you think you might be exposed to any COVID-19 positive individual.

**Transportation to and from work:**

We recommend that the staff and users of animal facility avoid using public transportation during the COVID-19 emergency and consider alternatives (such as private vans etc.) to avoid increased chance of close contact with presymptomatic COVID-19 patients.

**General Guidelines for Personal Protection and Sanitization**

**Note:** Animal facility will provide surgical masks, gloves, impermeable gowns and overshoes; however N-95 and other respirators, if required, should be arranged by the user from their Department or other sources.

1. Temperature monitoring will be done of all staff and users daily using a thermal infrared thermometer.
2. The main entrance of animal facility has a hand sanitizer installed for everyone entering the facility. All users should sanitize their hands and enter the facility.
3. Sanitize your hands again after you enter the facility in case you have used the door handle to avoid exposure to the virus.
4. Unauthorized individuals and visitors will not be allowed in animal facility.
5. Use sanitizers (placed on walls) before entering and exiting all sections of animal facility.
6. Please use designated sink for hand washing at frequent intervals.
7. Wearing a mask is mandatory in the animal facility at all times.
8. Kindly cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow/tissue paper. Please discard the tissue paper in bins lined with red trash bags.
9. Maintain a distance of at least 2 meter (6 feet) with your fellow worker at all times. Avoid clustering of researchers and animal facility staff.
10. Strict action (including withdrawal of ECACU approval) can be taken if researchers are found to be neglecting these precautionary measures and SOPs.
11. Animal facility will be cleaned using disinfectant in the morning at 9.00am and at 4pm in the afternoon by the housekeeping.

**Guidelines for Working with Animals in Cages (changing bedding, feeding, inspection etc.)**

1. All persons should use hand sanitizer before and after handling animals.
2. Use of personal protective equipment including surgical mask, water-impermeable gown and gloves is mandatory for all personnel coming in contact with animals or their cages.
3. When coming in contact with animals or interior of animal cages, the gloves should be sanitized between cages
4. When one person at a time needs to be in the animal room, he or she should wear a surgical mask. When it is necessary for two individuals to working together due to nature of work, they should wear an FDA-approved N-95, KN-95 mask or elastic respirator half-face mask. For list of FDA approved products please see <https://www.fda.gov/media/136663/download> .

**Guideline for Working in Animal Facility Procedure Room:**

1. Booking of procedure room a day before usage is mandatory (contact Dr. Viram Kumar at Krishna.viram@aku.edu)
2. No more than 2 people will be allowed in any of the animal rooms at any given time.
3. When one individual needs to be working in the procedure room, he or she should wear a surgical mask. When two individuals are working, they should wear an FDA-approved N-95, KN-95 mask or elastic respirator half-face mask (see link [above](https://www.fda.gov/media/136663/download)).
4. All animal procedures should be done on down-draft sink table. In case of risk of splashes, face shield must be worn.
5. Before the start of procedure, user should clean working area with chlorine-based solution (provided by animal facility) or 70% ethanol. At the end of work, the user should clean all visible contamination due to their work with chlorine-based solution and 70% ethanol.
6. Dispose all waste in red trash bags used for biohazard material.

**Guidelines about Animals Suspected to Have COVID-19 Infection:**

Keeping in view that we do not have any diagnostic test in place to test animals for suspected COVID-19,the user is required to agree that in case any animal appears sick with fever, respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, that animal along with all others in the same cage will be removed and euthanized.

**Guidelines about Animals Potentially Exposed to COVID-19 Infection:**

If an animal user (e.g. facility staff or researcher) is found to be COVID-19 positive and has recently handled animals without PPE, or with PPE that were inappropriate or used incorrectly, then the animals will be considered ‘exposed’ by extrapolation of the definition of human exposure by CDC. These animals will be euthanized irrespective of their health status.

**Guidelines for Use of Assistance from Animal Facility Staff:**

As minimal number of staff are working at a given time, users are advised to minimize their need for assistance.

**Disclaimer before Starting/Restarting Research Work in Animal Facility:**

ECACU and AKU have developed guidelines and SOPs in accordance with internationally available current best evidence and guidance form reputable resources, and considers working with animals according to these guidelines as constituting MINIMAL to NO RISK for personnel. However, the risk of animals getting infected cannot be eliminated, thus ECACU and AKU take no responsibility for any loss of animals, research resources or data, and the time lost thereby.

Moreover, experimental conditions need to be stable across experiments, and COVID-19 being a novel infection poses hitherto unknown alterations in animal behavior and biology. Only essential animal research is permitted in these times, and research work which needs to be done out of necessity. If personnel follow the guidelines and SOPs it is expected that experiments would be reliable; however ECACU cannot be held accountable for integrity of research results or safety of personnel if its guidelines and SOPs are not followed.

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