



Animal Research Facility Management & Research Compliance

Nine Practices that Strain Resources & Introduce Risk (and How to Remedy Them)

Animal research practices, processes, and tools have advanced for the better in numerous ways in recent decades. That being said, vast inefficiencies within many research organizations still remain and continue to persist because “that’s the way it’s always been done” or due to a variety of operational factors.

Here, we highlight nine practices that strain resources and introduce risk in research organizations as well as insights into how they can be remedied.

1. Relying on Paper-based Materials and One-off Spreadsheets

Using paper-based materials is still a common practice that introduces both inefficiency and risk. Filling out forms and cage cards manually is not only a time-consuming process, but also brings human error into the equation at a much higher frequency. Disparate spreadsheets that track animal identifiers and care records aren’t much better as they can allow multiple “sources of truth” to exist at once.

A fully connected digital environment fosters compliance, promotes accuracy, and automates many checks and tasks to improve operations.

2. Enabling Reactive and Elongated Compliance Processes

Approvals and review cycles slow down when compliance committees don’t have access to all the information they need up-front. Questions that arise during reviews or inspections in many organizations result in an unnecessary back-and-forth that stems from disconnected or walled-off data, ultimately taking time away from the research project.

Centralizing information in a secure manner supports on-demand access and a more accurate view of project data to accelerate communications and cross-functional processes. With a centralized system in place, compliance risk is lowered, fines are avoided, and it allows for more time to review rather than spending time tracking down communications.

3. Adopting One-size-fits-all Templates

Every research project is unique and has its own set of needs. Using generalized templates to capture and maintain animal history records and operational tasks don't take these unique organizational and project needs into account.

Templates can serve as a directional starting point for projects but should also allow for easy and intuitive tailoring so that they optimally support the environment in which they will be used. In addition, when trying to go completely paperless in a research project, this capability becomes crucial.

4. Duplicating Data Entry and Upkeep Tasks

Duplicated data upkeep and entry across multiple systems occurs more often than most organizations realize. This approach lowers productivity and sets the stage for conflicting and inaccurate information. Disconnected systems and applications that contain differing degrees of overlapping information also mean there is not a single source of truth and that non-value-added manual tasks are being carried out.

Moving to a fully connected and aligned system supports a frictionless flow of information, prevents inconsistencies and mistakes, and reduces IT and administrative burdens.

5. Using Manual Billing Processes

Larger research projects might handle thousands of cages, which creates a time-consuming billing process when executed manually. Manual billing and invoice processes can't efficiently calculate costs based on per diems, animal procurement, husbandry, and services, thus leaving money on the table and delaying payment for the expenses incurred.

Implementing an automatic billing and invoicing system creates an efficient workflow when you have thousands of cages and need a streamlined process.

6. Trusting Manual Verification Processes

Having team members manually verify content for accuracy and completion of required information sets the stage for mistakes and compounding problems. While the process of verification can look different depending on your research organization, the need for accuracy stays the same.

Rule-based software allows for tracking of user interactions and entries which can spot mistakes more efficiently and prevent them from happening in the first place.

"tick@lab allows the institution to ensure accurate and complete recoveries are made for animal care, veterinary and research services provided to investigators"

– Major University, New York

7. Isolating Training Records Management

Ineffective management of training records can lead to team members' certifications and training requirements lapsing. Missing this important information will put the organization in a state of non-compliance. Manually tracking training expiry and large quantities of training records without connection to related systems and processes create logistical barriers and compliance vulnerabilities.

Replacing these approaches with a user-based system integrated with training libraries such as AALAS, CITI or a homegrown solution centralizes all certifications on one platform, allows for automation of training expiry alerts and doesn't require upkeep after initial setup.

8. Allowing Too Many Non-Standardized Data Entry Fields

Lack of standardization across data entry fields is a challenge many research organization face. Many are

unaware of the discrepancies it causes in reporting. While some organizations, especially in pharma, get it relatively close, exactness is sometimes hard to achieve across projects and systems. Looking at it from a software perspective presents opportunities for standardization within one organization.

Standardization along with contextual information to ensure consistency can be achieved by limiting free text fields. Opting for verifications through pre-configured selections can ensure your data is consistent as well as create a more efficient workflow.

9. Wasting Surplus Materials

Ineffective sourcing and management of surplus biological materials from animals lead to excessive quantities of animals used.

By centralizing the information to one platform, you can gain access to real-time availability of materials from other projects, from sources you may not otherwise have had access to. This helps institutions and researchers show their active commitment to the 3R's, as well as being more cost-effective.

How a-tune Can Help

Remedy these nine problematic practices by simplifying and streamlining your animal research facility and compliance management with **tick@lab**. One single and secure access point provides stakeholders with all the information and functionality they need. Create efficient workflows, manage review processes, and reduce the risk of human error within your research organization.

See **tick@lab** animal research facility and research compliance in action.

Request a demo today.

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