



## Department of Primary Industries

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Vice Chancellor  
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Dear Licence Holder,

Victoria's climate has been increasingly warm over the past few years, with several days over 40°C predicted for the summer of 2009-2010. Licence holders are reminded of their obligations under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* with respect to the maintenance of the environment in which animals are kept for the purposes of a scientific procedure or a specified animal breeding licence. Specifically, licence holders are obliged to keep animals in accordance with the following mandatory Codes of Practice:

- *The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (the Australian Code)
- *The Victorian Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits* (the Laboratory Animals Code)

The Australian Code (§4.1.4) states that "(a)nimals must be provided with environmental conditions that suit their behavioural and biological needs unless other conditions are approved by the AEC for a particular project."

The mandatory maximum temperature for the housing of laboratory rats, mice and guinea pigs is 24°C. Laboratory rabbits must be housed below 30°C (Appendix 1 of the Laboratory Animals Code).

Licence holders are recommended to prepare for the coming summer by ensuring that:

- Animal House air conditioning systems are serviced and fully functional;
- Air conditioning and power generation backup systems are tested and serviced;
- Alarm systems exist for plant operation and room temperature, and these are tested;
- Shade and waterpoints are sufficient for animals housed outside;
- Emergency plans are in place for the breakdown of lighting, heating or cooling (as required by §4.4.12 of the Australian Code). Australian conditions exceed the ratings of many air-cooled air conditioning systems and it must be anticipated that these systems will fail when temperatures rise above the mid-30's.

Hyperthermia is a distressing physiological state occurring when the body is unable to dissipate enough heat to preserve a normal core body temperature. Without treatment, hyperthermia can cause multi-organ failure and death. Inappropriate management of the animal environment during



extreme temperatures, leading to hyperthermia, may constitute an offence under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.

Licence holders may expect audits conducted by the Bureau of Animal Welfare in 2010 to focus on the management of animals in extreme temperatures.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Stephen Tate**  
**Director, Bureau of Animal Welfare**

