

# Blood Collection Procedures for Rabbits

## **Blood collection from central ear artery**

Blood can be collected from the central auricular artery (ear) on most rabbits with a 20 g needle. It is important to handle the rabbit gently and keep it calm. A rabbit restraining device is the best way to restrain a rabbit for this procedure.

Vasodilation: Warm compresses, heating lamps, tourniquets, 70% alcohol swabs, and drugs such as Acepromazine will promote vasodilation for easier blood collection. Xylene is toxic to the skin and cannot be used topically to cause vasodilation.

## **Potential Adverse Outcomes**

Hematomas can form if blood leaks out in the tissue during collection.

Tissue or nerve damage as a result of poor blood collection technique may cause pain resulting in self mutilation by the animal. In this case the animal will need analgesics and possibly antibiotics if the site is infected.

Poor clotting or excessive blood withdrawal may result in anemia. No blood should be collected until the anemia has resolved (approximately 4 weeks).

Infections can occur if the technique is not aseptic. Before blood collection, fur may need to be shaved, the skin should be cleaned with Betadine® or 70% alcohol, and the needles should always be sterile. Never reuse needles on another animal.

Training by a skilled operator is required before attempting any of these procedures on an animal. If no one in your lab is available to train you properly for a procedure you want to perform, please contact Gail Moore at 362-3860 for a teaching demonstration for any of these blood collection methods. DCM training labs (rats and mice) are available on a weekly basis. For other rodent species and larger animals, training is available on an individual basis.