A PRACTICAL METHOD FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF GUINEA-PIGS UNDER TREATMENT

A. PARKER HITCHENS

From the Mulford Biological Laboratories, Glenolden, Pennsylvania

The problem of identifying guinea-pigs under treatment is a simple one if only a few animals are in use; the popular method of recording their colors may be adequate; or, separate cages or pens may be provided for each animal. But in laboratories where ten or more animals are inoculated every day a more highly systematized method is required.

Celluloid or aluminum ear tags are both convenient and satisfactory for a small number of animals; they are not easily lost unless two or more full grown male pigs are kept in the same pen. The ear tag method, however, has the disadvantage of consuming considerable time. Furthermore it involves an extra item of stock to look after; if the tags happen to be all used, there may be some difficulty and annoyance in finding a substitute.

Another method in common use is a pictorial description of the animal. On the record sheet is printed the outline of a guinea-pig with the regions of the body indicated. The colors are then noted on the diagram according to their regional distribution. In some laboratories, a rubber stamp is used as the basis for the pictorial description, an arrangement which may be desirable when the same record sheet is to be used for other animals. Many laboratory workers merely draw an elongated oval with little marks at one end to represent eyes and ears and record on this simple diagram the color distribution. All these pictorial methods are reliable, but so much space is required for the esquisse that the record of a large amount of work becomes extremely bulky.
The most valuable method for practical purposes would seem to be one whereby (1) ears tags and other equipment are rendered unnecessary, (2) the description is recorded on a single line, on ordinary paper without special ruling or diagram. Although systems similar to the one about to be described have probably been in use for some time, none has appeared to the writer so satisfactory as the elaboration of what was originally merely a makeshift series of abbreviations invented at the time for a particular purpose. The fundamental idea of the plan in question was conceived by Dr. Joseph McFarland more than fifteen years ago; and with a few modifications by the writer, the same method has been used in these laboratories ever since that time. The readiness with which an assistant of no training can learn to describe and recognize guinea-pigs accurately seems to be sufficient recommendation for a more widespread use of this system of abbreviations.

The rules according to which guinea-pigs are described and identified in the Glenolden laboratories are as follows:

**IDENTIFICATION OF GUINEA-PIGS**

1. Not more than 5 to 8 guinea-pigs are kept in one pen.
2. The assistant in describing the animals mentions first the weight, and then the sex, before calling out the description.
3. The sex is denoted thus:
   
   Male.................................................................♂
   Female.................................................................♀

4. The sides (Right and Left) and the colors are represented in abbreviations by the capitalized initial letter.
   The sides of the animal are written thus :
   
   Right............................................................. R
   Left................................................................. L

The colors are recorded as follows:

1 The difference between the abbreviations for red, "R", and right, "R", are to be noted.
METHOD FOR IDENTIFICATION OF GUINEA-PIGS

White................................................................. W
Cream........................................................................
Yellow........................................................................
Silver (silver agouti).................................................. S
Silver and yellow..................................................... Y
Red...........................................................................
Red and Gold...........................................................
Gold (golden agouti).................................................. G
Fawn (also chocolate)................................................. F
Yellow and Slate........................................................
Slate...........................................................................
Red and Black.........................................................
Black.........................................................................

5. The varieties of coat are described thus:

Hair Clipped........................................................... C
Rough........................................................................
Angora......................................................................

6. The regions of the body are represented by small letters as follows (see fig. 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nose......</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face......</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head......</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye......</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear......</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Root (of ear) | ~  
| Shoulder | ~      |
| Pleura.... | ~      |
| Hip...... | ~      |
| Flank (pleura and hip) | ~      |
| Sacrum... | ~      |

7. The pigs are described in the order of the depth of their coloring, a white pig, for instance, is mentioned first, then a pig with few markings over only a small part of the body. Pigs of solid colors come last in the order given above. White is mentioned only when the entire pig is white.

8. In describing an animal, the assistant starts with the fore part of the body on the right side (R); he mentions the color—say, of the right eye—and proceeding backward enumerates the

* Note the difference between -S- (silver) and -S- (slate).
parts having this color, first on the right side then on the left (provided, of course, this color is distributed on both sides); he then mentions the next color in the same order from the head backward.

9. In the case of two pigs with mixed colors over the entire body it is convenient to note the two colors and follow this by a characteristic difference. Occasionally there may be several pigs exactly or almost exactly alike—white, for instance, or red and black. In such cases, it may be necessary to clip the hair on the nose or some other part of the body.

10. The description of 8 guinea-pigs in a certain pen might be written as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{W} & \text{White} \\
\text{WR} & \text{White with red about the right eye} \\
\text{SELY} & \text{Slate right ear and left eye and hip, yellow right shoulder and pleura} \\
\text{BEY} & \text{Black eyes, ears and red pleura} \\
\text{BR} & \text{Red and black mixed but with red on nose} \\
\text{BB} & \text{Red and black mixed but with black on nose} \\
\text{RBB} & \text{Red and black mixed with the hair on the nose clipped} \\
\text{B} & \text{Black}
\end{array}
\]
It will be noted that the entire description of the animal is recorded without raising the pen or pencil from the paper.

Since this system is based upon abbreviations, the question may be asked, why not go still further and use shorthand characters? It is true that shorthand once learned would consume less time, but it would require considerable training for a new assistant to become sufficiently familiar with shorthand characters to write them rapidly and accurately. In the author's experience, on the other hand, it has not required more than two or three fifteen-minute periods to instruct any new assistant in the satisfactory use of the above method.