



Environmental Enrichment Program for Animals

This policy provides information about the environmental enrichment program for research animals at UNC-Chapel Hill. The policy is applicable to all animals, except those for which an exception has been submitted to and approved by the IACUC.

The goal is to provide housing which promotes species typical behaviors and enhances the overall well-being for animals. The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (NRC, 1996) stipulates, "Depending on the animal species and use, the structural environment should include resting boards, shelves, or perches, toys, foraging devices, nesting materials, tunnels, swings, or other objects that increase the opportunities for the expression of species typical postures and activities that enhance the animals' well-being." The *Guide* further states that, "It is desirable that social animals be housed in groups; however, when they must be housed alone, other forms of enrichment should be provided to compensate for the absence of other animals, such as safe and positive interactions with the care staff and enrichment of the structural environment."

Each animal cage must be provided with at least one of the following acceptable enrichment items (unless the investigator has an IACUC approved exception):

- Social grouping for socially compatible animals whenever the scientific design of the study allows.
- * PVC tunnels for mice (default method)
- * DLAM will provide nesting material to all breeding and nude mice (unless the investigator has specifically requested eliminating nesting material).
- Nyla-rings may be attached to the wire lids of mouse cages.
- Crinkle paper for rats (default method)
- Rabbits will be provided with at least one of the following: bells, balls or chew toys.
- The IACUC recommends co-housing compatible rabbits.
- Non human primates will continue to be group housed and a variety of toys, puzzles and food treats will be provided on a rotational basis.
- Cats will continue to be group housed and have perches and resting huts. Various sanitizable play items will continue to be added on a trial basis.
- Balls and/or chew items will be provided for dogs and pigs housed indoors.
- Aquatic and other species may be provided with enrichment according to their specific needs.

Every attempt will be made to choose items that have the desired effect and are durable, sanitizable and safe. The above items have been used at many other institutions and have been considered beneficial.

Instances will arise when social grouping or enrichment items may be inappropriate for the scientific goals of the study or the health of the animals. If investigators believe that providing cage enrichment would have a negative impact on the study or be detrimental to their animals, an exception to the policy may be granted by the IACUC on a case by case basis. Please note that exceptions to the enrichment policy need to be approved by the full Committee (meetings are held monthly) and cages exempt from the policy must be clearly identified with a capital red letter "E" in the upper right corner of the DLAM barcoded cage card. In a reverse light

cycle room, this capital “E” should be in black or blue ink. To request an exception, complete addendum 8.0 of the Animal Care Application (ACAP), [Exception Request Form](#), and submit it electronically to the IACUC as part of a full application or as an amendment to an already approved application. Describe the scientific rationale for withholding environmental enrichment so the IACUC can provide full consideration of your request.

* Should an alternative enrichment item be preferred instead of PVC tubes, please coordinate details with the facility supervisor. No amendment or exception is required for this option. *