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UNIVERSITY STANDARD

Title

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL STANDARD ON SOCIAL HOUSING OF RESEARCH ANIMALS

Introduction

PURPOSE

The standards and procedures described below provide guidance to all researchers and animal handlers for the social housing of research animals. The IACUC considers issues related to animal welfare and the scientific goals of the research when determining the social housing requirements of research animals.

SCOPE OF APPLICABILITY

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

The UNC-CH IACUC expects that anyone involved in animal work at the University will comply with this Standard. Requests for exceptions to this Standard must be reviewed and approved by the IACUC and/or DLAM Management.

Standard

The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (NRC, 2011) states that, "Appropriate social interactions among members of the same species (conspecifics) are essential to normal development and well-being (Bayne et al. 1995; Hall 1998; Novak et al. 2006).

When selecting a suitable social environment, attention should be given to whether the animals are naturally territorial or communal and whether they should be housed singly, in pairs, or in groups. An understanding of species-typical natural social behavior (e.g., natural social composition, population density, ability to disperse, familiarity, and social ranking) is key to successful social housing."



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Social housing of all social research animal species is the default housing environment at UNC-CH. Single housing of social species (other than short term recovery from experimental manipulation) must be justified based on experimental requirements and described in Section 6.0.5b of the protocol. The justification can be submitted for review and approval by the IACUC as part of a new or continuing ACAP application or via an amendment.

All singly-housed USDA covered species must have a ‘Single Housing’ card on the cage to indicate the reason for non-social housing. It is the laboratory’s responsibility to ensure that these cards are placed and maintained to accurately reflect the current status of each animal. For animals without a permanent record, this card serves as a social housing record history for the life of the animal. If the animal has a permanent record, the reason for single housing must also be written in each animal’s permanent record. The cards and/or the records must be readily available for review by the IACUC, DLAM and outside regulators upon request.

DLAM veterinary staff may also require individual housing of animals due to medical concerns. However, this will be indicated in the animals’ medical record and may not need to be described in the protocol. DLAM Veterinary Services and the IACUC consider demonstrated incompatibility within social groups to be grounds for immediate separation for protection of animals.

When necessary, single housing of social animals should be limited to the minimum period necessary and, where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. In the absence of other animals, additional enrichment should be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species; periodic release into larger enclosures; supplemental enrichment items; and/or the addition of a companion animal in the room or housing area.

EXCEPTIONS

Requests for exceptions to this Standard must be reviewed and approved by the IACUC and/or DLAM Management.

Source: Committee for the Update of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals; National Research Council, *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2011), 51, 64, 83.



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Definitions

IACUC: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

DLAM: Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine

University Standard: The minimum acceptable limits or rules used to achieve Policy implementation, enforceable by the IACUC

Social Housing: The housing of animals in groups or pairs in order to facilitate natural species-typical, social behaviors.

Related Requirements

EXTERNAL REGULATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

UNIVERSITY POLICIES, STANDARDS, AND PROCEDURES

For more general guidance, please refer to the [University Policy on the Care and Use of Vertebrate Animals for Research, Training and Teaching Purposes](#).

Contact Information

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Email
IACUC Protocol and Training	OACU	919-966-5569	iacuc@med.unc.edu
Veterinary Services	DLAM	919-966-2906	
Husbandry	DLAM	919-962-5335	

Important Dates

- Effective Date and title of Approver: 01/2013; UNC IACUC
- Revision and Review Dates and title of Approver: *Revised July, 2013. Revised April, 2015.* UNC IACUC



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Approved by: UNC IACUC

Dr. Mitchell Picker
UNC IACUC Chair

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