

# Animal Care and Use Program Policy

## Social Housing



Version 1.1

Date Effective:

June 12, 2014

Research Integrity Office

[IACUC@ohsu.edu](mailto:IACUC@ohsu.edu)

[WestCampusiacuc@ohsu.edu](mailto:WestCampusiacuc@ohsu.edu)

CWC office: 503.494.8408

WC office: 503.690.5289

503.629.4139

### Background

Federal regulations state that single housing of social species should be the exception and, when necessary, should be justified based on experimental requirements or veterinary-related concerns about animal well-being. Social housing promotes basic behavioral needs and contributes to the psychological wellness of many animals. The wellness of animals is necessary to produce quality research where animal subjects are involved.

It is recognized that social housing and/or the presence of environmental enrichment, such as additional bedding or cage structures, may confound scientific goals in some types of research. Investigators who believe that social housing or enrichment materials may confound their research objectives must provide scientific justification in order to allow single housing and/or exclude enrichment materials from the housing environment. Requests for exceptions to this policy must be included in the IACUC animal care and use protocol for committee review and action as appropriate. The IACUC must review these exceptions on a regular basis.

### Scope

All research animals that are housed at OHSU.

### Policy

Single housing of social species is the exception. Social housing will be considered the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behavior, veterinary-related concerns regarding animal well-being, or scientific requirements approved by the IACUC. Animals are considered socially housed when they cohabit with at least one other compatible conspecific (e.g., two or more animals living in a single cage).

### Procedures

- I. If singly housing of animals is necessary because of one of the issues outlined above, then single housing will be limited to the minimum period necessary. Depending on the species visual, auditory, olfactory and, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics will be provided to singly housed animals.
- II. In the absence of other animals, additional enrichment will be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species of concern; periodic release into larger enclosures; supplemental enrichment items; and/or the addition of a companion animal in the room or housing area to accommodate the aforementioned contact.
- III. Socially housed animals should have sufficient space and structural complexity to allow them to escape aggression or hide from other animals in the pair or group. This will come in the form of perches, visual barriers, shelters, and/or elevated shelves, depending on the species in question. Conversely, singly housed animals may require more space per animal than social housed

animals and will be provided with this space to meet performance outcomes and regulatory requirements.

- IV. Justification for deviation from the social housing policy will be documented in the protocol prior to the start of an experiment.
- V. If the Attending Veterinarian deems single housing necessary for incompatible individuals and/or veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, this will be documented in the animal health record. Exemptions from single housing for veterinary concerns and/or incompatibility issues will be reviewed on a regular basis by the veterinarian and for nonhuman primates every 30 days, unless the basis for the exemption is a permanent condition
- VI. For animals that have been single housed for prolonged periods, behavioral assessment and monitored pairing will take place.

#### **Authority**

1. Institute for Laboratory Animal Resources, National Research Council, *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th Edition, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 2011.
2. United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Welfare Act Regulations ([http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/awa\\_info.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/awa_info.shtml))
3. USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Policies ([http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/policy.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/policy.shtml))

#### **References**

1. AAALAC, International. Position Statement on Social Housing. July 2011. (<http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm>).