

BACKGROUND

The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (the Guide) states “single housing of social species should be the exception and justified based on experimental requirements or veterinary-related concerns about animal well-being. In these cases, it should be limited to the minimum period necessary.” “The need for single housing should be reviewed on a regular basis by the IACUC and veterinarian.” Public Health Service (PHS) Policy (II; IV, A, 1) requires that institutions comply with the Guide.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Social species are defined as all laboratory animals at University of Rhode Island, except reptiles and amphibians. Social animals must be group housed unless one of the following justifications for single housing exists:

- Experimental Requirements:
 - Single housing must be approved by the IACUC and the appropriate animal technician must be notified prior to single housing.
- Veterinary health reasons:
 - Written veterinary approval is required, and must state the health reason for single housing the animal, the period(s) in which single housing is required, the frequency of reevaluating for health reasons.

Typically, social housing should be categorized on IACUC protocols as United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Pain Category “C”.

Exceptions: The IACUC recognizes that situations exist in which single housing of Non-USDA covered social species (e.g. rats and mice) may be inevitable. These include:

- Separation of aggressive cage mates.
- Death or termination for experimental reasons of a cage mate (resulting in a singly housed animal).
- Pregnant females separated to prevent overcrowding.
- Separation of pups at weaning when the number of pups does not allow for all animals in a litter to be placed with a compatible cage mate (e.g., single male pups).

The IACUC acknowledges that in these situations attempts to socially house the animals could significantly alter scientific outcomes and/or jeopardize animal welfare. The IACUC grants

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IACUC POLICY
SOCIAL HOUSING

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approval for single housing for the standard exceptions listed above. The time that an animal is kept in single housing should be minimized.

Social Well-Being: When single housing occurs, methods to ensure social well-being (enrichment) must be implemented under the direction of the veterinary staff.

REFERENCES

Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th Edition (2011)

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Guide-for-the-Care-and-Use-of-Laboratory-Animals.pdf>

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