



Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

## **Policy on Social Housing**

The purpose of this policy is to define housing standards and considerations for social species of laboratory animals at Oakland University.

Full time social housing is the preferred and expected method for housing social animals unless otherwise justified based on scientific rationale outlined in the IACUC approved animal care and use protocol, social incompatibility, or the animals need to be individually housed due to veterinary medical or animal welfare concerns.

Single housing of social animals, when necessary, should be limited to the minimum period required and provide a combination of visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile contact of conspecifics when possible. Single housing in the absence of other animals (solitary housing) requires the provision of additional enrichment to provide for a social experience, which may include but is not limited to positive interaction with animal care personnel, periodic supervised access to larger enclosures, and supplemental enrichment items approved by BRSF management.

Exceptions from social housing may occur due to:

- Program wide exemptions based on performance standards (described below).
- Research exceptions based on research needs and specifically justified in the animal care and use protocol and approved by the IACUC. These exceptions will be reviewed at least annually.
- Clinical veterinary exceptions based on animal health, condition or well-being, as determined by the veterinarian or the veterinarian's designee. These exceptions will be documented in the animal record or cage card, and reviewed at least every 30 days.

### **Program Wide Exemptions**

The IACUC may also grant program wide exceptions based on performance standards. The following are IACUC approved program wide social housing exceptions:

1. Single housing of intact male rabbits, guinea pigs, or male and female hamsters due to aggressive behaviors commonly observed when pair or group housed.
2. Standard practices in breeding colony management that result in the need to periodically single house animals, including
  - a. Male mice, if they are not used for breeding and are combined into cages before 4 weeks of age should be group-housed.
  - b. Any males separated from cage mates for more than a week may be singly housed thereafter.\*

**Policy on Social Housing**  
**IACUC Approved 05-18-15**  
**Updated 06-21-18**

- c. Single housing breeder males between mating with females, and after being used for breeding may be singly housed thereafter when not in the presence of a female.\*  
\* This housing is considered a positive animal welfare activity to prevent fighting of male mice which may lead to wounds and/or death. Aggression between male mice paired after weaning (4 weeks or older) is well documented.
  - d. Single housing pre-parturient females,
  - e. Single housing animals of either sex at weaning when the litter makeup contains a single male and/or a single female at the time of weaning.
3. Standard practices in managing surgery or other technical procedures including
- a. Single housing animals for fasting prior to surgery or other procedures that require general anesthesia,
  - b. Single housing animals for up to 14 days for post-operative recovery and observation. The need to single house animals for greater than 14 days post-operatively must be outlined in the IACUC approved protocol.
4. The unavailability of another socially compatible animal due to
- a. Aggression or incompatibility
  - b. The animal is the sole remaining animal in an experimental group due to research attrition.

The Attending Veterinarian or designee may grant an exception for animals from social housing on an individual basis due to incompatibility or for veterinary medical and/or animal welfare concerns.

This policy will be reviewed by the IACUC at least annually.

#### **References**

1. The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th ed., NRC, ILAR 2011.
2. AAALAC International's Position Statement on Social Housing, [www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm#social](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm#social)
3. AAALAC FAQ Social Housing and Social Experience, [www.aaalac.org/accreditation/faq\\_landing.cfm#C6](http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/faq_landing.cfm#C6)
4. 2013 Symposium at NIH on Social Housing of laboratory animals; contributors include NIH, USDA, OLAW, The Enrichment Record, CAAT
5. Duke University Animal Care and Use Program Policy on Social Housing

