



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance (ORC) Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Housing of Social Species

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Responsible University Office:
Office of Research Compliance IACUC Office(s)

Responsible University Administrator:
Vice President for Research

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Scope

This policy applies to all animals owned by IUSM for use in teaching, research, or exhibition on IACUC-approved protocols. The purpose of this policy is to define what constitutes a social species as well as what is considered an acceptable justification for single housing of a social species at IUSM. The intent of this document is to define the IACUC's policy and to provide guidance to investigators.

Background

The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals states that members of a social species should be socially housed whenever possible. The *Guide* indicates 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."

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the IACUC that social experience is the standard for social species. However, the IACUC recognizes that not all members of social species are compatible and that there are circumstances when social housing and/or enrichment is not possible. When making this evaluation, the IACUC believes that there should be consideration that an animal's social experience can generally occur as a normal aspect of the animal's housing environment or as a separate activity that occurs outside of the primary enclosure such as in an exercise room or cage, a corridor, or other similar areas. Requests for exceptions to this policy must be included in the IACUC Animal Care and Use Protocol for committee review and approval. The IACUC must review and approve these exceptions on a regular basis.

The IACUC recognizes that there are certain scenarios that would preclude the social housing of animals. The following are general categories of exceptions to the social housing policy and the IACUC approval requirements for each category.

1. **Experimental Requirements:** When the single housing of a social species is necessitated (other than short-term recovery from experimental manipulation) for experimental reasons, a scientific justification/rationale must be provided in the appropriate section of the ACUP and approved by the IACUC as an experimental exception to the institution's social housing policy.
2. **Veterinary Care:** The Attending Veterinarian or other LARC veterinary staff may require social animals to be housed individually for veterinary medical and/or animal welfare concerns. Exemptions from single housing for veterinary care purposes are documented in the animal's health record and, for USDA regulated species, reviewed every 30 days unless the basis for the exemption is a permanent condition. IACUC approval is not required for veterinary care exemptions from social housing.

Standard Animal Husbandry and Management Practice:

The IACUC approves single housing of social animals for standard husbandry practices/situations when attempts to socially house the animals has been shown to jeopardize animal welfare. A specific justification in the animal care and use protocol and case by case approval by the IACUC is not required for the following situations, which are considered program wide social-housing exceptions based upon standard practices:

1. Separation of aggressive or incompatible conspecifics. The IACUC and veterinary staff recognize the following categories of animals are aggressive and/or incompatible with conspecifics:
 - a. Unfamiliar adult male mice
 - b. Male retired breeder mice and rats
 - c. Sexually mature male rabbits
 - d. Sexually mature female rabbits that have not been previously socially housed
2. Individual housing when an animal is considered a danger to other animals or personnel
3. Individual housing due to attrition of cage/pen mates or uneven number of animal
4. Individual housing during quarantine prior to entering a facility/conditioned colony when animals are not received in established pairs or groups
5. Standard practices in breeding colony management that result in the need to periodically house animals individually including:
 - a. Single housing breeder males between mating with females
 - b. Single housing pre-parturient females
 - c. Single housing animals of either sex at weaning when litter makeup contains a single male and/or female at the time of weaning
6. Standard practices in managing surgical procedures or other procedures in USDA regulated species, including:
 - a. Single housing animals for fasting prior to surgery or other procedures that require general anesthesia
 - b. Single housing animals up to 14 days for post-operative recovery and observation, continuing until wound has been deemed stable by veterinarian.

General Considerations:

When social animals must be housed singly:

1. Justification for single housing should be defined for the shortest period of time necessary

2. Additional environmental enrichment, exercise/release into a larger enclosure, and/or human interaction will be provided, unless scientifically contraindicated and justified in the IACUC study
 3. Con-specifics will be housed in visual, auditory, olfactory and/or tactile range, whenever possible
 4. If primary cage size is the limiting factor for the ability to group house, LARC will develop a plan to address the need for larger caging where feasible
 5. Animals that have been singly housed may need gradual introduction to cagemates and close supervision
 6. Veterinary consultation should be used to determine if compatible cagemates can be found
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References

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
3. USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Policies
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/policy.shtml
4. AAALAC, International. Position Statement on Social Housing. July 2011
<http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm>.