



Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Policy on Environmental Enrichment

The University of Georgia (UGA) Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and University Research Animal Resources (URAR) are committed to ensuring the humane and appropriate care of research animals throughout its research and instructional programs. This policy is intended to uphold this commitment by ensuring institutional compliance with guidance documents and federal regulation by establishing policy that supports a program for Environmental Enrichment (EE) of animals used in research and instruction.

UGA's EE Program is designed to promote the psychological well-being of research animals while not compromising the safety of personnel, animal health and safety, or the scientific goals of UGA researchers. **EE will be provided consistently to all animals as the default standard of care and exemption from this standard requires sound scientific justification provided in an approved Animal Use Protocol.**

The use of appropriate enrichment allows animals to better cope in an artificial setting, thereby reducing variability in research data and improving quality of life for the animals. The UGA IACUC and URAR recognize that the goals of EE can be achieved through multiple means. However, URAR has developed standard enrichment provisions based on available scientific data that encourage natural behaviors and are cost-effective and minimally labor intensive. URAR will deploy these provisions for all animals within their care. Alternative EE must be approved by the Attending Veterinarian and all associated costs will be assumed by the investigator. The UGA IACUC and URAR encourage consistent application of all EE, recognizing that uniformity minimizes the effect of EE on scientific outcome and ensures that the environmental enrichment needs of all animals are met.

As a PHS Assured and AAALAC accredited institution, the UGA biomedical research program fully complies with all standards set forth in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*. The *Guide* states: "The primary aim of environmental enrichment is to enhance animal well-being by providing animals with sensory and motor stimulation, through structures and resources that facilitate the expression of species-typical behaviors and promote psychological well-being through physical exercise, manipulative activities, and cognitive challenges according to species-specific characteristics." As such, URAR has summarized natural behaviors for all animal species housed within the program and has adopted Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the EE of these animals that promote species-specific behaviors and the reduction or elimination of stereotypies. The SOPs clearly define: Natural Behavior, Social Enrichment, Physical Enrichment, Activity/Food Enrichment (if applicable) and any stereotypical behavior that might indicate a need for environmental enrichment change or enhancement.

The Environmental Enrichment Program is designed to be dynamic in nature. Through the regular revision and update of SOPs, the Program will meet the enrichment needs of new and existing animal models through regular monitoring, innovation and adoption of current science-based practices.