



## **Guidelines for Ferret Housing in T2000 Containment Caging**

The expectation is that IACUC Guidelines will be followed as best practice. They allow the Animal Care & Use Program to attain acceptable performance outcomes to meet the intent of the regulations. As such, any planned variation from the guidelines requires prior IACUC approval and must be based on a scientific rationale.

### **Introduction**

The Guide recommends performance indices be considered when determining appropriate enclosure space, and states that cages must allow space for animals to express their natural postures and postural adjustments without touching the enclosure walls or ceiling. For ferrets that must be housed in containment caging due to biosafety requirements, the IACUC has determined that Allentown Type 2000 IVC (T-2000) cages meet the Guide standards.

The T2000 cages offer many advantages. First, they benefit the animals' welfare, because they allow for better observation of the animals than some other containment cages. Animal care personnel can more readily observe signs of illness or other abnormalities. In addition, the cages are lighter, and ergonomically safer for personnel to handle. However, because these cages offer less space than standard ferret caging, the IACUC has established limitations for housing ferrets in these cages.

### **Limitations on Purpose**

The T2000 cages should be used to house ferrets only when containment caging is required for biosafety reasons, such as when the ferrets are infected with respiratory viruses. They are not to be used as to house uninfected animals, with 2 exceptions:

- Ferrets can be placed into T2000 cages shortly before infection, when necessary for logistic purposes. In this situation, the infection should be scheduled to occur within a few days.
- Ferrets that are received into the AHRC directly from the vendor can be housed in T2000 cages for the duration of the acclimation period. In this situation, the infection should be scheduled to occur immediately after the acclimation period ends.

### **Limitations on Use**

Maximum number of ferrets per cage: 2\*

\*Due to the social nature of ferrets, the benefits of companionship are considered to outweigh the impact of less floor space per animal.

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Maximum number of consecutive days a ferret can be housed in the T2000 caging: 28 days

Maximum number of times (periods) a ferret can be housed in the T2000 caging: 6 periods

Minimum number of consecutive days a ferret must be rested, in standard caging, between periods of housing in the T2000 cages: The same number of days the ferret was in the T2000 caging during the most recent period. For example, a ferret housed in a T2000 cage for 21 days must have at minimum 21 days in standard caging, before it can be housed in a T2000 cage again.

### **Reference**

Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (*Guide*), NRC, 2011.