



Policy on Social Housing of Animals

This UGA IACUC policy complies with the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy), the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)*, and the USDA Animal Welfare Act Regulations.

Social housing will be considered the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behavior, veterinary-related concerns regarding animal well-being, unavailability of appropriate social companions or scientific requirements approved by the UGA IACUC.

Justification for deviation from the social housing policy will be documented in the IACUC protocol prior to the start of an experiment in the case of scientific requirements and experimental necessity. If a URAR Veterinarian or the Attending Veterinarian deems single housing necessary for veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, this will be documented in the animal health record. Exceptions to the need to document individual cases in the animal health record include: breeding purposes, such as to prevent overcrowding or to prevent mating; an animal that is the only member of that experimental group, such as through attrition of a group of mice in one cage during an experiment; and animals not covered by the USDA Animal Welfare Act that need to be separated due to aggressive behavior such as adult male mice.

Rabbits: While every effort should be taken to obtain littermates of adult rabbits for social housing in long term experiments, rabbits that have been singly housed at the vendor or are not littermates may be singly housed to prevent aggressive behavior.

For animals that have been singly housed for prolonged periods, behavioral assessment and monitored pairing by trained veterinary and/or animal care staff will take place in order to deem social housing safe and appropriate and to match compatible animals with one another.

In the case of single housing of social animals, it will be limited to the minimum period necessary and, where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics will be provided. Enrichment will be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species of concern; periodic release into larger enclosures; supplemental enrichment items.

It is recommended that the enclosures of social animals that are singly housed be labeled, with the reason for single housing denoted. URAR provides unique index cards to designate an animal as singly housed.

Socially housed animals should have sufficient space and structural complexity to allow them to escape aggression or hide from other animals in the pair or group. This will come in the form of perches, visual barriers, shelters, and/or elevated shelves, depending on the species in question. Conversely, singly housed animals may require more space per animal than social housed animals and will be provided with this space to meet performance outcomes and regulatory requirements.

Policy on Social Housing of Animals

References

1. AAALAC, International. Position Statement on Social Housing. July 2011.
(<http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm>).
2. 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., 2010.
3. United States Department of Agriculture, Animal Welfare Act Regulations
(http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/awa_info.shtml)
USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Policies
(http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/policy.shtml)
(http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/awr/awr.pdf).
4. American Dairy Science Association, American Society of Animal Science, and the Poultry Science Association. Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching, 4th edition, 2020.