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# The University of Georgia

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## Office of the Vice President for Research

### **Environmental Enrichment Policy**

The University of Georgia (UGA) Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and University Research Animal Resources (URAR) is committed to ensuring the humane and appropriate care of research animals throughout all of its teaching and research programs. To this end, the UGA IACUC and URAR is dedicated to the adoption of policies and procedures that comply with all federal regulations and guidelines and are based on the highest of ethical standards. The UGA IACUC and URAR recognizes the important role of research and teaching to the betterment of science and humanity and respects the important contributions of animals toward this endeavor. This regard is honored by excellence in animal husbandry and care including the adoption of a robust Environmental Enrichment Program.

UGA's Environmental Enrichment Program is designed to promote the psychological well-being of research animals while not compromising the personnel safety, animal health and safety or research goals of our investigators. Environmental Enrichment (EE) will be provided consistently to all animals as the default standard of care and can only be exempted with rigorous scientific justification. 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. (Carlstead et al., 1993) The UGA IACUC and URAR recognizes that the goals of EE can be achieved through multiple means. However, URAR has developed standard enrichment provisions that encourage naturally inherent 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 consistency for 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 an 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 will 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 best-known practices.