

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

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IACUC GUIDELINE: ANIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT AND SOCIAL HOUSING

DATE IMPLEMENTED: November 19, 2010

DATE(S) REVISED: June 10, 2011; May 17, 2013; July 9, 2014; November 27, 2018; May 29, 2020 (review only)

Scope:

Each animal facility (central vivaria and satellite facility) should have an enrichment program for the animals housed in that facility. The program should be described in the corresponding animal husbandry standard operating procedure (SOP) for that facility. The enrichment program(s) should be reviewed and updated by the IACUC, Principal Investigator (PI), and Attending Veterinarian on a regular basis to ensure that it is beneficial to the animal well-being, consistent with the goals of animal use, and reflects current knowledge. Personnel responsible for animal care and husbandry should be familiar with the animal enrichment program and receive training in the behavioral biology of the species they work with to appropriately monitor the effects of enrichment as well as identify the development of adverse or abnormal behaviors.

At a minimum, an enrichment program should include:

1. Social housing as the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behavior, veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, or scientific necessity approved by the IACUC.
2. Single housing for the minimum period necessary.
3. Provision for providing animals that are single housed visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics, where possible.
4. Provision for providing animals that are single housed with an environmentally enhanced cage environment (structure and substrate, etc.), which benefits the animal's well-being. If the PI believes that providing an environmentally enhanced cage environment is not compatible with study design or beneficial to the animal's well-being, then the PI must receive an exemption from the IACUC by way of an approved IACUC protocol or protocol amendment.