University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus

IACUC
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Subject:	**Social Housing of Animals**
Source:	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
Effective Date:	08/11/2025
Replaces:	12/11/2023
Applies to:	Personnel involved in Research or teaching studies involving animals.
Reference:	Animal Welfare Act; PHS Policy on Humane Care & Use of Laboratory Animals. Guide for the Care & Use of Laboratory Animals

Introduction

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) maintains oversight review for federally mandated rules and regulations with regard to animal research, ethics, misconduct and biomedical research for the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus (CU Denver | Anschutz). The IACUC reviews all procedures using animals in research or teaching. The IACUC evaluates and reviews all activities related to the care and use of animals and determines if the proposed activities are in accordance with regulations.

Policy Statement

This policy is intended to provide information on the social housing of animals. According to the current edition of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, which has been adopted by both AAALAC and OLAW, social housing of social animals in compatible groups or pairs is strongly encouraged and should be considered the "default" housing method. Single housed animals should be the exception and based on either scientific / experimental requirements or animal health and/or welfare concerns. A social species is defined as any species known to naturally live and interact with conspecifics (animals of the same species). The majority of animals housed at the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz Medical Campus are considered social species.

Procedures

- Full time social housing in pairs or groups is the preferred and expected method for housing social animals unless it has otherwise been approved on an IACUC protocol for scientific reasons or another reason listed below.
    - If full time social housing is not available, part-time social housing is the next most desirable. The time that the conspecifics are able to be socially housed should be documented.
    - Single housing should be limited to the minimum period required and should provide a combination of visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile contact of conspecifics when possible.
    - Single housing in the absence of other animals requires the provision of additional enrichment to provide for a social experience, which may include but is not limited to positive interaction with humans, periodic supervised access to larger enclosures, and/or supplemental enrichment.
- Single housing of animals may be required for veterinary medical or animal welfare concerns as determined by OLAR veterinarians and must be documented.
    - Veterinarians can only provide an exemption for veterinary medical or animal welfare concerns. Scientific justifications for single housing must be approved by the IACUC.
    - Any veterinary separation will be regularly reviewed by an OLAR veterinarian.
- There are some common animal colony and program management practices where single housing is acceptable. In these cases, Lab staff and OLAR staff will ensure the addition of secondary enrichment. This additional enrichment will be added when the cage is generated containing a single-housed animal (either by Lab staff or OLAR staff). OLAR staff will also verify additional enrichment is present during the cage change process and will add additional enrichment as needed. These program wide exceptions to social housing DO NOT require IACUC or Veterinary approval. These include:
    - Standard practices of rodent in-house breeding colony management including:
        - Single housing pregnant females prior to delivery
        - Single housing animals of either sex at weaning when a litter contains a single male and/or single female
        - Single housing males in between mating with female
        - Standard practices of rodent in-house breeding
    - Rabbits

        - Single housing male rabbits due to aggressive behaviors commonly observed when pair or group housed.
        - Single housing female rabbits that have been the aggressor or on the receiving end of severe or prolonged aggression and are not able to be housed with another compatible rabbit.
    - All Species
        - Single housing due to experimental group attrition (e.g. one animal remaining in an experimental group)
        - Documented aggressiveness or social incompatibility
        - The unavailability of another socially compatible animal
        - Standard practices in managing surgery or other technical procedures including:
            - Single housing to accomplish pre-anesthetic fasting
            - Single housing up to 14 days for post-operative recovery and observation. The need to single house beyond 14 days must be outlined in the IACUC approved protocol.

Per regulatory requirements, failure to comply with this policy may result in notification of your funding agency (e.g. NIH) and regulatory agencies (e.g. USDA) that your research has violated federal and/or local policies regarding the humane use of animals. This notification may affect continuous funding of your animal-related research. Further, depending on the violation, you may be required to take additional training and/or your privilege to conduct animal research at CU Denver | Anschutz might be temporarily suspended or even completely revoked.