

## Policy on Social Housing and Environmental Enrichment

This document establishes the policy of the IACUC regarding social housing and environmental enrichment involving animals maintained at the University of Kentucky and used in education, research, or testing.

### Social Housing

The vast majority of animals used in research, education, and testing are social species. In general, social animals must be housed in stable pairs or groups of compatible individuals **unless otherwise justified based on scientific necessity, social incompatibility or veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being**. In some situations, a partial number of animals in a group may be used for experimental procedures, leaving a single animal in the enclosure.

In these cases, single housing of social animals should be limited to the minimum period necessary, and where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. In the absence of other animals, enrichment should be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species of concern, and supplemental enrichment items or the addition of a companion animal in the room or housing area.

Some large animal species (e.g. horses and cattle) may be single-housed in stalls due to size limitations without need for justification, so long as an additional animal of the same species is in visual or auditory contact.

The need for single housing based upon experimental requirements is the exception and must be scientifically, or otherwise (e.g., animal welfare reasons) justified in the animal use protocol and reviewed and approved by the IACUC. The need for single housing should be reviewed on a regular basis by the IACUC and veterinarian. Single housing of social species based upon veterinary medical concerns should be documented in the medical records, reviewed on a regular basis, and approved by the veterinarian.

### Environmental Enrichment

Well-designed enrichment programs provide animals with choices and a degree of control over their environment. Components of an enrichment program may include social, occupational, physical, sensory or nutritional approaches.

Not all items added to an animal's environment are beneficial and some enrichment items may actually be detrimental and/or could be considered as variables in the experimental design.

Environmental enrichment programs should be designed by knowledgeable individuals, assessed at regular intervals and documented and reviewed at appropriate intervals by the IACUC and the Attending Veterinarian.

Withholding of environmental enrichment based upon experimental requirements is the exception and must be scientifically or medically justified in the animal use protocol and reviewed and approved by the IACUC. Withholding of environmental enrichment should be reviewed on a regular basis by the IACUC and veterinarian. Veterinary staff may also decide to withhold environmental enrichment in unique circumstances when doing so would medically benefit an animal.

### References:

1. **Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources (U.S.)**. 2011. *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
2. **The American Society of Animal Science (ASAS)**. 2010. *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching*. Champaign, IL: Federation of Animal Science Societies.

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