Policy #30: INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC) POLICY FOR REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING OF ANIMALS

Purpose: As described in the Guide, social housing is the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behavior, standard agricultural husbandry practices, veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, or scientific necessity approved by the IACUC. In general, social animals must be housed in stable pairs or in groups of compatible individuals. If singly housing animals is deemed necessary, it should be limited to the minimum period possible and animals should be rehoused with appropriate conspecifics at the earliest possible time. During single housing, where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. In the absence of other animals, additional enrichment should be offered, such as positive interaction with humans, periodic release into larger enclosures, supplemental enrichment items, and/or the addition of a companion animal in the room or housing area.

Exceptions to social housing

The IACUC approves single housing of social animals for standard agricultural husbandry practices or situations where attempts to socially house the animals could jeopardize animal welfare. When animals are single housed for one or more of such reasons, a specific justification in the animal use protocol and case by case approval by the IACUC are not required.

Examples of such situations include, but are not limited to:

- separation of aggressive or incompatible conspecifics (for example, stallions and bulls are normally housed individually due to inherent aggressiveness, two adult male dogs may be housed individually due to potential for fighting)
- individual housing due to attrition of cage/pen mates or uneven number of animals
- pregnant females separated to prevent overcrowding following birth of offspring
- individual housing in preparation for pending parturition
- quarantine prior to entering or reentering a facility or herd
- separation of littermates at weaning when the number of offspring does not allow for all animals in a litter to be placed with a compatible cage mate (for example, single male weanlings)
- animals housed singly for short term recovery post-operatively; single housing must be for the minimum amount of time necessary for recovery and/or healing as determined by the PI in consultation with the Attending Veterinarian
- individual calf housing to prevent the spread of disease until the calf’s innate immunity is sufficient to allow for mixing
- individual housing when an animal is considered a danger to other animals, to itself or personnel
- individual housing following standard agricultural husbandry practices (cows in stanchion barns, horses in stalls)
- individual housing for clinical reasons at the discretion of the Attending Veterinarian where it is required based on veterinary concerns related to medical treatment
Experimental Requirements

When single housing of social species (other than short term recovery from experimental manipulation) is necessitated for experimental reasons, a scientific justification must be described in the animal use protocol, submitted for review and approval by the IACUC, and the single housing cannot begin until approval is granted by the IACUC for that protocol.

References

A. Cornell University IACUC Policy # 550: Exemptions to Social Housing of Animals

B. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals- 8th edition, NRC

C. http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm#social


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