

Policy: SC-31-800
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ILAR/APHIS

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Title: Husbandry Care of Ground Squirrels

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for ground squirrels housed in an indoor or outdoor facility.

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for squirrels must meet or exceed these minimum requirements based on the USDA Animal Welfare Regulations (*AWR*) and the ILAR Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (*Guide*). Deviations or exceptions must be approved by the Attending Veterinarian and the IACUC.

III. Procedure:

Daily (365 days a year without exception):

- Observe each animal and check for health concerns (*AWR* 2.33 (b.3)).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Record sick and dead animals, and report findings to Campus Veterinary Services (CVS) or designated clinical veterinarian per standard operating procedure for reporting sick or dead animals.
- Record minimum and maximum temperatures and humidity (if indoor facility).
- When housed indoors, change heavily soiled cages (*AWR* 3.31a2, *Guide* pg. 69-70).
- Clean and organize rooms, anterooms, and surrounding areas, including removing encroaching vegetation around outdoor enclosures.
- Record daily completion of each task, initial each task, and date the log.

Weekly (not to exceed every 7 days):

- Provide clean water and food bowls (*Guide*, pg. 70).
- Clean and disinfect metal burrow boxes, or equivalent enrichment device, then add 3 inches of fresh bedding material.

Biweekly (not to exceed every 14 days):

- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure, feed and water receptacles every two weeks or more often if needed (*AWR* 3.29-3.31).

As Needed:

- Chow must be discarded after 6 months of the milling date (*Guide* pg. 66) unless manufacturer guidelines recommend a shorter or longer expiration date.

- Disinfect the animal room including walls, floors, and ceilings (if possible) (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Outdoor enclosures should be cleaned regularly to prevent excess buildup of spider webs, leaf litter, and other extraneous materials.
- Monitor and assess outdoor enclosures for extreme temperatures, flooding, or other weather events. Ensure animals have access to a dry shelter at all times and relocate them, if needed, per the facility emergency plan.
- Each facility will develop their own best practices for sanitization of the macroenvironment typically occurring every 6 months or whenever there is a change in species.

Identification

- Squirrels must be individually identified in addition to having an appropriately labeled cage card (*Guide* pg. 75) (See Identification of Animals policy).
- Individual animal health records will be maintained for all weaned animals.

Environmental Enrichment:

- Refer to the Environmental Enrichment policy [\(SOC-30-102\)](#).

Facilities

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing ground squirrels (*Guide* pg. 143).
- Adequate ventilation must be provided for the health and comfort of the animal at all times, by means of windows, doors, vents, or air conditioning and shall be ventilated so as to minimize drafts, odor, and moisture condensation. (*AWR* 3.126)
 - A minimum of 10-15 fresh room air exchanges per hour shall be provided in animal housing areas (*Guide*, pg. 46).
 - Auxiliary ventilation, such as exhaust fans and vents or air conditioning, shall be provided when ambient temperature is above comfortable levels (*AWR* 3.126(b))
- Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide*, pg. 137). Refer to Physical Plant SOC 50-102.

Housing:

- Caging/Enclosures must be in good condition, free of any damage that may cause injury, and escape proof.
- Cage sizes must provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement (*AWR* 3.128)
- Outdoor enclosures should provide sufficient protection from environmental extremes, such as shade structures, nest boxes, and wind breaks (*AWR* 3.127(a,b))
- For any hand washed items, QA testing is required based on SOC 50-103