

Policy: SC-31-900
Date: 6/9/2025
Enabled by: IACUC/AV/
ILAR/APHIS
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Title: Husbandry Care of USDA Covered Rodents

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for USDA covered rodents, including, but not limited to, guinea pigs, hamsters, deer mice, and voles.

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for USDA covered rodents 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 2.33b3).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available (AWR 3.29 & 3.30, *Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Record sick and dead animals to Campus Veterinary Services (CVS) or designated clinical veterinarian per standard operating procedure for reporting sick or dead animals.
- Record/document minimum and maximum temperatures and humidity on the daily log
 - Temperature range for rodents is 68°F to 79°F (*Guide* pg. 44).
 - Humidity range for rodents is 30% to 70% (*Guide* pg. 44).
- Change any excessively soiled or flooded cages (AWR 3.31a2, *Guide* pg. 70).
- Clean and organize room, anterooms, and surrounding premises (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Record daily completion of each task, initial each task, and date the log.

Weekly (depending on caging type):

- Provide clean solid bottom non-ventilated caging. (*Guide* pg. 70)(Provide clean catch pans for wire-floor caging (*Guide* pg. 70).
- Provide clean bottles and sipper tubes (*Guide* pg. 70).
- Clean or flush automatic water delivery valves (i.e. lixits) at cage change (*Guide* pg. 72).

Biweekly (depending on caging type):

- Provide clean individually ventilated cages (AWR 3.31a1).

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- Provide clean cage tops. (Guide pg. 70)
- Clean or flush automatic water delivery valves (i.e. lixits) at cage change (Guide pg. 72).

As needed:

- Disinfect the animal room including walls, floors, and ceilings (if possible) (Guide pg. 72).
- Remove and replace worn or damaged equipment from primary enclosures and surrounding facility (Guide pg. 72).
- Chow must be discarded after 6 months of the milling date unless manufacturer guidelines recommend a shorter or longer expiration date (Guide pg. 66).
- Clean and sanitize feed storage containers (Guide pg. 67).
- 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.

Environmental Enrichment:

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

Facilities:

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing rodents (Guide pg. 143).
- Adequate ventilation must be provided for the health and comfort of the animal at all times.
 - A minimum of 10-15 fresh room air exchanges per hour shall be provided in animal housing areas (Guide pg. 46). IACUC-approved PI-maintained housing within lab spaces may be exempt
- Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (Guide pg. 137). Refer to Physical Plant SOC 50-102.

Housing:

- Whenever possible, and as appropriate based on species, rodents should be socially housed in compatible groups (Guide pg. 51).
- Floor space taken up by food bowls, water containers, and enrichment devices should not be considered part of the floor space (Guide pg. 56).
- Space requirements for USDA covered rodents should provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement.
- Space requirements for mice, recommended for deer mice (*Peromyscus* spp.):

Weight (g)	Floor Area/Animal (in ²)	Height (in)
<10	6	5
Up to 15	8	5
Up to 25	12	5
>25	≥15	5
Female with litter	51	5
(Guide pg. 57)		

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- Space requirements for hamsters (*Mesocricetus auratus*), recommended for voles (*Microtus* spp.):

Weight (g)	Floor Area/Animal (in ²)	Height (in)
<60	10	6
60-80	13	6
80-100	16	6
>100	19	6
Female with litter	121	6
(AWR 3.28, Guide pg. 57)		

- Space requirements for rats, recommended for rice rats (*Oryzomys palustris*):

Weight (g)	Floor Area/Animal (in ²)	Height (in)
<100	17	7
Up to 200	23	7
Up to 300	29	7
Up to 400	40	7
Up to 500	60	7
>500	≥70	7
Female with litter	124	7
(Guide pg. 57)		

- Space requirements for guinea pigs (*Cavia porcellus*):

Weight (g)	Floor Area/Animal (in ²)	Height (in)
Up to 350	60	7
>350	101	7
Female with litter	101	7
(AWR 3.28, Guide pg. 57)		