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**Title: Husbandry Care of Cats**

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I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for cats (*Felis catus*).

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for cats must meet or exceed these minimum requirements based on the USDA Animal Welfare Regulations (*AWR*), the ILAR Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (*Guide*), and Public Health Service Policy (*PHS*). 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).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Record sick and dead animals, and report them 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.
  - Temperature range for cats is 64°F to 84°F (*Guide* pg. 44).
  - Humidity range for cats is 30% to 70% (*Guide* pg. 44).
- Remove excreta (including scooping of litter boxes) and food waste (*AWR* 3.11).
- Spot clean cage or pen, including walls, resting boards, resting boxes, and queening boxes. If hosing is required, remove cats from pens or caging unless sufficient space is available for the animals to remain dry (*AWR* 3.11).
- Remove standing water (*AWR* 3.11).
- Remove and replace any enrichment devices that are worn, damaged, or heavily soiled (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Clean and organize room, anterooms, and surrounding premises (*AWR* 3.11).
- Record daily completion of tasks, initial, and date log sheet.

**Biweekly (not to exceed every 14 days):**

- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure, feed and water receptacles, and environmental enrichment (*AWR* 3.11).

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- Clean and disinfect or replace queening boxes, litter boxes, resting boxes, and resting boards (AWR 3.11).

### **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 (*Guide* pg. 66) unless manufacturer guidelines recommend a shorter or longer expiration date.
- Clean and sanitize feed storage containers (*Guide* pg. 67).

### **Identification**

- Weaned cats and older must be individually identified in addition to having appropriately labeled cage cards (AWR 2.38) (refer to AV Identification of Animals policy).
- Cats can be permanently identified with a collar and tag, ear tattoo or microchip (AWR 2.38).
- If cats are micro-chipped, the reader must be readily available and functional.
- If experimental or veterinary need dictates the removal of kittens from their dam prior to weaning, these kittens will be identified using one of the above methods.

### **Environmental Enrichment:**

- Refer to the Environmental Enrichment policy.
- Resting surfaces must be provided within the primary enclosure with the provision that all animals housed within that enclosure can rest comfortably at the same time (AWR 3.6).
- Cats should be provided the opportunity to demonstrate species typical behavior (*Guide* pg. 52).
- Examples of enrichment for cats include: balls, toys with catnip, scratch posts, cardboard boxes, cat beds.
- Devices used for environmental enrichment must be easily cleaned and disinfected or disposable (AWR 3.1).
- Devices must be checked regularly for wear and discarded when safety hazards are observed.

### **Facilities:**

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing cats (*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 3.2).
  - 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 85 F or higher (AWR 3.2).

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- Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide* pg. 137). Refer to Physical Plant and Facilities Maintenance policy.

### **Housing:**

- Caging/Enclosures must be in good condition, free of any damage that may cause injury and escape proof (*AWR* 3.6).
- Whenever possible, cats should be socially housed based on compatibility (*AWR* 3.6). All efforts should be made to find compatible social housing for singly housed cats.
- Cats that are singly housed due to experimental need or veterinary discretion must receive additional enrichment as well as positive human interactions at least daily (*Guide* pg. 64).
- Minimum floor space excludes food or water pans (*AWR* 3.6).
- Litter pans may be included in floor space if properly cleaned and sanitized (*AWR* 3.6).
- Resting surfaces that are low to the ground and do not allow comfortable occupation by an animal underneath are considered floor space and do not count towards resting space (*AWR* 3.6).
- Queens with nursing kittens must be provided 5% additional floor space per kitten (*AWR* 3.6)
- Space requirements:

Weight (kg)	Floor Area/Animal (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Height (in)
≤4	3	24
>4	≥4	24
( <i>AWR</i> 3.6, <i>Guide</i> pg. 59)		

**When housing this species, please also refer to the Animal Care Program's Standards of Care Policy on Pest Control, Identification and Labeling of Cages, Environmental Enrichment, Food Storage, House-Keeping in Facilities Housing Biomedical Research Animals, Physical Plant Facilities Maintenance, as well as the IACUC's Policy on Social Housing of Social Species.**