

Policy: SC-32-200
Date: 6/9/2025
Enabled by: IACUC/AV/
Supersedes: ILAR/APHIS
11/7/2012

Title: Husbandry Care of Cats

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for cats.

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for cats 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).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68). Water must be provided at least twice a day for 1 hour if not provided continuously (*AWR* 3.10)
- 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/document minimum and maximum temperatures and humidity on the daily log.
 - Temperature range for cats is 64°F to 84°F (*Guide* pg. 44).
 - Humidity range for cats is 30% to 70% (*Guide* pg. 44).
 - Broad daily temperature fluctuations are acceptable in facilities where the goal is to mimic the home environment of companion animals as long as room temperatures remain within the accepted range.
- 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 queenning 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 each task, initial each task, and date the log.

Biweekly (not to exceed every 14 days):

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

- 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).
- Trim toenails and brush hair coat.
- 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

- 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. If cats are acquired by USDA approved dealers and the animals are kept or transferred to another research facility, a copy of certification covered in AWA 2.133b must accompany the animal being transferred to be made available to USDA APHIS inspectors for 3 years following animal disposition (AWA 2.133g p. 118)

Environmental Enrichment:

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

Facilities:

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all facilities 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).
- Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide* pg. 137). Refer to Physical Plant SOC 50-102.

Housing:

UC Davis Office of the Attending Veterinarian Standards of Care

- 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 ²) | Height (in) |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| ≤4 | 3 | 24 |
| >4 | ≥4 | 24 |
| (AWR 3.6 pg. 141, <i>Guide</i> pg. 59) | | |