Title: Husbandry Care of Opossums

I. Purpose:

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

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for opossums 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).
- 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 opossums is 68°F to 79°F (Guide pg. 44).
  - Humidity range for opossums is 30% to 70% (Guide pg. 44).
- Change any excessively soiled or flooded cages (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 (not to exceed 7 days):

- Provide clean static caging (AWR 3.31 & 3.131).
- Provide clean catch pans for wire-floor caging (Guide pg. 70).
- Provide clean bottles and sipper tubes (Guide pg. 70).
- Clean automatic water delivery valves (i.e. lixits) at cage change (Guide pg. 72).

Biweekly (not to exceed every 14 days):

- Clean 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 with sanitization typically occurring every 6 months or whenever there is a change in species but may vary with facility.

**Environmental Enrichment:**

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

**Facilities:**

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

**Housing:**

- 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 opossums should provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement. Use rat space requirements.
- Space requirements for rats of the genus *Rattus*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (g)</th>
<th>Floor Area/Animal (in²)</th>
<th>Height (in)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 200</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 300</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 400</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 500</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;500</td>
<td>≥70</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female with litter</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Guide pg. 57)