

Policy: SC-32-400
Date: 6/9/2025
Enabled by: IACUC/AV/
ILAR/APHIS
Supersedes: 4/1/2022

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* 2.33b3).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available ((AWR 3.29 & 3.30, 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 ((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 (not to exceed 7 days):

- Provide clean static caging (*AWR*). 3.56a2 under rabbits
- 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:

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- 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 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*:

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)

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