

UC Davis Office of the Attending Veterinarian Standards of Care

Policy:	SC-36-100
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Enabled by:	IACUC/AV/ ILAR
Supersedes:	8/11/2015

Title: Husbandry Care of Snakes

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for snakes (species of the suborder Serpentes).

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for snakes must meet or exceed these minimum requirements based on 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 (*Guide* pg. 112).
- Ensure adequate potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Ensure adequate feed is available, as applicable by species (*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 snakes is species-dependent.
 - Humidity range for snakes is species-dependent.
- Spot clean and 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 tasks, initial, and date log sheet.

As needed:

- Ensure adequate feed is available, as applicable by species (*Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure (*Guide* pg. 69-71).
- Disinfect the animal room including walls, floors, and ceilings (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Remove and replace worn or damaged equipment from primary enclosures and surrounding facility (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Clean and sanitize feed storage containers (*Guide* pg. 67).

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Environmental Enrichment:

- Refer to the Environmental Enrichment policy.
- Snakes should be provided the opportunity to demonstrate species typical behavior. Examples of enrichment for snakes include hiding structures.
- Devices must be checked regularly for wear and discarded when safety hazards are observed.

Facilities:

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing snakes (*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 and Facilities Maintenance policy.

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).
- Animals must have enough space to express their natural postures and postural adjustments without touching the enclosure walls or ceiling, be able to turn around, and have ready access to food and water. In addition, there must be sufficient space to comfortably rest away from areas soiled by urine and feces (*Guide* pg. 56).

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.