

Policy: SC-32-400  
Date: 2/21/2024

## Purdue University Laboratory Animal Program Standards of Care

Title: Husbandry Care of Ferrets

---

I. Purpose:

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

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for ferrets 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 (*AVVR* 2.33).
- Ensure adequate feed and potable water is available (*Guide* pg. 65-68).
- Record sick and dead animals to LAP veterinary staff 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 ferrets is not specified by the *Guide* but room temperature should not be above 75°F. Ferrets may do well at lower temperatures (*Laboratory Animal Medicine*, 3rd edition pg. 579).  
Ferrets have poorly effective sweat glands and may be at higher risk for heat stress above 85°F.
  - Humidity range for ferrets is 40% to 65% (*Laboratory Animal Medicine*, 3rd edition pg. 579).
- Spot clean any excessively soiled or flooded cages (*Guide* pg. 70).
- Change heavily soiled or flooded cages and/or drop pans (*Guide* pg. 69-70).
- 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:

- Provide clean bottles and sipper tubes (*Guide* pg. 70).
- Change and clean enrichment devices such as tube hides and hammocks.
- Provide clean drop pans with clean bedding or absorbent paper (*AWR* 3.56)

Biweekly:

- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure and feed receptacles (AWR 3.56).

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).
- Nail trims and hair brushing are performed as needed, typically monthly
- 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 SOP # 305 - Social and Environmental Enrichment Program for Research and Teaching Animals

Facilities:

- Temperature alarms must be installed in all rooms housing ferrets (*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). IACUC-approved PI- maintained housing within lab spaces may be exempt
- Floors should be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide* pg. 137).

Housing:

- Whenever possible, and as appropriate based on species, ferrets should be socially housed in compatible groups (*Guide* pg. 51).
- 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 ferrets should provide sufficient space to allow each animal to make normal postural and social adjustments with adequate freedom of movement.

Space recommendations for 2 group-housed ferrets (not required by the AWA or the *Guide*, recommended):

Cage size	Grid size
24 x 24 x 18 in	1 x 0.5 in
Fox JG, Anderson LC, Otto G, Pritchett-Corning KR, Whary MT, eds. 2015. Laboratory Animal Medicine, 3rd edition. Academic Press: San Diego, CA. Chapter 14 - Biology and Diseases of Ferrets, o. 579.	