Mouse and Rat Housing and Cage Density Policy

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to ensure safe population densities in mouse and rat colonies at Purdue University. Overcrowded mouse and rat cages can be a significant animal welfare concern and violate federal policies which require that space recommendations of 8th edition *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (The Guide)* be appropriately applied.

**Policy for Mice:**

**For standard cages measuring (11” x 7” x 5”) or (11” x 6.25” x 5”)**

1. Breeding animals may be housed one adult male and one adult female mouse or one adult male with two adult female mice.
2. If one adult male and two adult females are housed together for breeding, female mice must be placed in separate cages as soon as pregnancy is apparent unless approved otherwise by IACUC. The male mouse may remain with one of the females.
3. An adult female mouse plus her own pups will be considered a single entity until the pups are 21 days old. At that time, the space requirements in *The Guide* must be applied.
4. Pups must be weaned by 21 days unless IACUC approval for delayed weaning has been given.
5. If a female mouse delivers a second litter of pups prior to the older pups weaning date. The older litter must be weaned.
6. Overcrowded cages are those standard mouse cages that have greater than 5 adults of the same sex or 5 weanlings of the same sex in a cage. Overcrowded cages must have the number of animals reduced immediately.

**For large breeder cages measuring (11” x 19” x 5”)**

1. Breeding animals may be housed one male plus up to three females.
2. When the dam is separated/removed and mice are weaned (regardless of their age), they are considered adult mice and the Guide and IACUC Policy must be followed.
3. Any pups may remain until weaning at 21 days of age at which time they must be weaned unless IACUC approval for delayed weaning has been given.
4. As the potential for newborn pups being in the cage along with litters of 2-3 week old mice exists, extra care may be needed to assure that ample food and water are available at all times and that cages do not become excessively soiled.

**Policy for Rats:**

A maximum of two rats is allowed in any standard size cage post-weaning. If at any time the weight of the two animals combined reaches 1000g, the animals must be separated and housed singly. It is recommended to weigh paired adult rats over 400g each at least monthly to ensure compliance with this policy. In the event that an odd number of animals is present on a study, to facilitate social housing one cage may contain three rats. The total of the rats may still not exceed 1000g, therefore animals approaching 300g should be weighed at least monthly.

Approved by IACUC 3/18/2015
Revised 05/18/2022
For West Lafayette campus:
From Allentown: 11.818”L X 7.638”W X 15.533”H = 142 sq. inch of floor space

From Alternative Design: 10.25”L X 18.75”W X 8”H = 141 sq. inch of floor space

From Innovive: 17”L x 13.4”W x 9.9”H = 141 sq. inch floor space

For Ft. Wayne campus:
For large rat cages (22x12.5 in.), a maximum of 4 rats is allowed post-weaning. If at any time the total weight exceeds 2000g, the cage must be separated, preferably by splitting the rats into 2 pairs.

Reference: The Guide for the Care and use of Laboratory Animals-8th edition, NRC

Note: Breeding colonies must be attended to every day by investigative staff including weekends and holidays. Investigators not complying with the population policy will receive a Non-Compliance IACUC Housing notification and be given 24 hours to correct the situation unless the welfare of the animals requires immediate separation. Failure to correct the situation in the time allotted will result in EVPRP staff weaning the cage and charging tech time (separation of overcrowded cages is not covered under the per diem). A report of Non-Compliance IACUC Housing Policy occurrences will be sent to IACUC monthly.