

## Purdue University Laboratory Animal Program Standards of Care

### **Title: Husbandry Care of Rabbits**

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I. Purpose:

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

II. Policy:

All units providing animal care for rabbits 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 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 rabbits is 61°F to 72°F (*Guide* p.44)
  - Humidity range for rabbits is 30% to 70% (*Guide* p.44)
- Check automatic watering systems.
- Change heavily soiled or flooded cages and/or drop pans (*Guide* pg. 69-70).
- Spot clean floors and walls of cages and pens. If hosing is required, remove rabbits from pens or caging unless sufficient space is available for the animals to remain dry (*AWR* 3.56).
- Clean and organize rooms, anterooms, and surrounding areas (*AWR* 3.56).
- Record daily completion of each task, initial each task, and date the log.

**Weekly (not to exceed every 7 days):**

- Provide clean water bottles and sipper tubes (*Guide*, pg. 70).
- Provide clean drop pans with clean bedding or absorbent paper (*AWR* 3.56).
- Clean litter pans for floor-housed rabbits

**Biweekly (not to exceed every 14 days):**

- Clean and disinfect primary enclosure, feed and water receptacles (*AWR* 3.56).
- Provide clean rabbit cages and racks for cage housed animals (*Guide* pg. 70).
- Clean and change environmental enrichment.

**As Needed:**

- Chow must be discarded after 6 months of the milling date (*Guide* pg. 66) unless manufacturer guidelines recommend a shorter or longer expiration date.
- Disinfect the animal room including walls, floors, vents, and ceilings (if possible) at least every 6 months or when room changes species. (*Guide* pg. 72).
- Nail trims and hair brushing are performed as needed, typically monthly
- 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.

**Identification**

- Rabbits must be individually identified in addition to having an appropriately labeled cage card (*Guide* pg. 75) (See Identification of Animals policy).
- Rabbits can be permanently identified with an ear tag, ear tattoo or micro-chip (*Guide* pg. 75).
- If rabbits are microchipped, the reader must be readily available and functional.

**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 rabbits (*Guide* pg. 143).
- Adequate ventilation must be provided for the health and comfort of the animal at all times, by means of windows, doors, vents, or air conditioning and shall be ventilated so as to minimize drafts, odor, and moisture condensation. (AWA 3.51)
  - A minimum of 10-15 fresh room air exchanges per hour shall be provided in animal housing areas (*Guide, pg. 46*).
  - Auxiliary ventilation, such as exhaust fans and vents or air conditioning, shall be provided when ambient temperature is 85 F or higher. (AWA 3.51)

Floors shall be moisture-resistant, non-absorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth (*Guide, pg. 137*).

**Housing:**

- Caging/Enclosures must be in good condition, free of any damage that may cause injury, and escape proof (AWR 3.50).
- Rabbits over 4 months of age should be singly housed unless sterilized. (Guide pg. 64).

Rabbit Space requirements:			
Weight of Adult (kg)	Floor Area/Animal (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Floor Area/Female + Litter (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Height (in)
<2.0	1.5	4.0	16
2.0-4.0	3.0	5.0	16
4.0-5.4	4.0	6.0	16
>5.4	≥5.0	7.5	16
(Guide pg.59)(AWR 3.53)			