

<b>University of Notre Dame Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Policy</b>	
<b>Title: Social Housing</b>	
<b>Effective Date: 7/10/24</b>	<b>Last Revised Date: 7/10/24</b>

### I. Purpose

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Some species are social, and naturally live and interact with conspecifics. Housing should include access to opportunities to engage in species-typical behavior with other animals, unless an exception is warranted.

### II. Definitions

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**Social housing:** Housing animals in same sex, compatible pairs, or groups in the animals' primary enclosure.

**Conspecifics:** Animals belonging to the same species.

**Environmental enrichment:** Additions to an animal's environment that facilitate the expression of species-typical behavior and promote psychological well-being through physical exercise, manipulative activities or cognitive challenges

### III. Policy

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1. The IACUC will consider pair or group housing of social animals the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on:
  - a. Social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behaviors,
  - b. Veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, or
  - c. Scientific necessity justified and approved by the IACUC.
2. The Principal Investigator (PI) must scientifically justify departure from social housing, when circumstances necessitate that animals be individually housed due to experimental requirements.

3. While single housing during post-operative recovery does not require justification, exceeding the immediate recovery period does require specific justification to be documented in the approved IACUC protocol.
  - a. Social housing of social animals post-operatively has been demonstrated to promote their well-being and is not presumed to result in increased likelihood of trauma to surgical sites or disruption of closure methods.
4. The following are considered exceptions to the default expectation that animals be housed socially:
  - a. Hamsters are generally solitary animals with the exception of males housed in male-only rooms.
  - b. Individual housing of rodents in the breeding colonies may occur under the following circumstances:
    - i. Breeder male mice, when removed temporarily from the breeding cage
    - ii. Female breeders may be separated and individually housed when they are visually pregnant
    - iii. Rodents that are being aged for use in the breeding colony may be singly housed for no longer than a 4 week period
    - iv. A single female pup may remain with the mother at weaning to assure appropriate socialization
    - v. A single male pup can be housed with female siblings up to but not exceeding 7 days post-weaning
5. When social animals are by necessity housed singly as a result of scientific necessity, attrition or veterinary concerns, appropriate sensory access to conspecifics and environmental enrichment will be provided unless scientifically justified.
6. When USDA-covered animals are housed singly due to veterinary concerns, the exception must be recorded in the animal's health record and reviewed at least every 30 days.
7. If primary enclosures do not allow for social housing, provisions for group socialization should be made outside the primary enclosure.
8. To improve the success of socially housing male mice, bedding may be transferred from a nesting or sleeping area to the clean cage.

#### **IV. References**

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1. Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations, United States Department of Agriculture, 2017
2. The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th ed., National Research Council, 2011, p.52-55
3. AAALAC International's Position Statement on Social Housing
4. AAALAC FAQ on Social Housing and Social Experience