



**Title:** Social Housing

**Policy Number:** 027

**Policy Intent:** The intent of this policy is to describe and define the Social Housing of social species used for Teaching, Demonstration or Research at Texas Tech University.

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### 1. Purpose

- A. Researchers, faculty, employees and students must be concerned with the well-being of teaching, demonstration and research animals that are housed at TTU. The environment, caging or penning and the contact that these animals have with conspecifics should also be of concern, which reflects a fundamental ethical principle.

### 2. Background

- A. *The Guide to the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* and *The Ag Guide* state that social species should be housed in stable groups of compatible individuals unless they must be housed alone for experimental reasons or because of social incompatibility. Single housed animals for greater than 12 hours for experimental reasons must be described and justified in the Animal Use Protocol and approved by the IACUC as an exception.

### 3. Policy

- A. It is the policy of the TTU IACUC that social housing is the standard for social species. It is an exception to The Guide and Texas Tech University policy to single house social animals. Social species are defined as species that are highly interactive with conspecifics and whose psychological well-being is associated with social interactions. Social species include: rodents, rabbits, ferrets, dogs, cats, livestock, birds, fish, and amphibians.

### 4. Procedures

- A. Some degree of visual, auditory, olfactory and/or tactile contact with conspecifics will be provided to singly housed animals when possible.
- B. When single housing is justified in the Animal Use Protocol it should be for the shortest period of time necessary and evaluated regularly. The date when animals become singly housed should be identified and the reason for single housing noted.
- C. When single housing is justified, additional steps should be taken to provide additional enrichment or human interaction, unless scientifically contraindicated.
  - 1) Extra enrichment may be provided by increasing the number of enrichment items offered at one time or change the enrichment rotation more frequently.
    - a. Singly housed mice must be provided with a shelter.
  - 2) Provide an exercise pen in a larger enclosure with added enrichment or novel opportunities, and to display species-specific behaviors.
    - a. Can include supervised conspecific play time.



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- 3) Provide extra human-interaction opportunities (e.g. petting, playing, giving treats).
  - 4) Provide a mirror for livestock species, as their reflection is seen as a conspecific.
  - 5) One species can be used as a companion for another species if appropriate.
- D. The IACUC does recognize that not all members of social species are compatible and that there are circumstances when social housing is not possible. Justification in the Animal Use Protocol is not required for the following:
- 1) Veterinary concerns regarding the well-being of the animal or if the animal is under veterinary treatment or observations.
  - 2) Observed social incompatibility (e.g. fighting, food guarding, etc.).
  - 3) Immediate post-operative recovery.
  - 4) Purchased separately with no mate to house together.
  - 5) Industry-standard housing (e.g. calf hutches, gestation crates).
  - 6) Attrition of cage mates.
    - a. If other animals are going to be regrouped, then they must be observed for compatibility. It is recommended to not combine male mice after weaning.
    - b. If animals are not compatible, then additional steps above should be taken.
  - 7) Breeding animals.
    - a. Gestating females (e.g. rodents, sows).
    - b. Breeding males (e.g. rodents, bulls, boars).

### 5. References

- *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition
- *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition