



# University of Maryland College Park

## Animal Care and Use Standard

### Social Housing

**Purpose:** This standard describes the social housing of social animals on campus.

**Background:** The Animal Welfare Regulations, *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, and *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching* detail basic behavioral management expectations in the broad areas of structural environment, social environment, and activity. Social species, particularly prey species, are motivated to interact with conspecifics for comfort, play, access to food and shelter resources, and as an anti-predator strategy. The *Guide* states that single housing of social species should be the exception. Appropriate housing spaces or enclosures should also account for the animals' social needs.

**Standards:** Social animals housed at University of Maryland-College Park facilities will be socially housed with conspecifics as the default housing method. Social housing exemptions may be considered for incompatibility, veterinary health concerns, or scientific necessity as approved by the IACUC. If approved, single housing for social animals should be limited to the minimum necessary time period and where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. Additional enrichment should be offered in accordance with the IACUC enrichment standard and animal care standard operating procedures (SOPs). The animal care staff and research staff will work to identify appropriate cage mates for animals singly-housed through attrition. The IACUC and/or AV will reassess exemptions at least twice a year during the semiannual facility inspection and program reviews.

**Methodology:**

1. Program. Routine animal housing, including social housing for social species (unless exempted), will be provided in accordance with species-appropriate animal care SOPs.
2. Review and Update. Research personnel, veterinarians and the IACUC should regularly review the animal care and housing program, including social housing and exemption considerations, to ensure it is meeting the goals of enhanced well-being and benefit to the animals as well as the scientific goals of the research. Periodic review should also include consideration of current knowledge.
3. Training. Personnel responsible for animal care and husbandry should receive training in the behavioral biology and clinical health checks of the species they work with to routinely monitor animal health and behavior, as well as identify the development of adverse or abnormal behaviors or conditions, including those related to social housing (e.g., excessive barbering or fighting).
4. Reporting. Feedback regarding the success of particular program elements is important in ensuring the most effective enrichment program. In addition to monitoring housing conditions that appear to best enhance well-being, personnel responsible for animal care and husbandry should promptly report any adverse health or behavioral effects (e.g., fear, social stress, dominance aggression related to resources, etc.) associated with social housing to the facility veterinarian and/or university attending veterinarian for assessment.