

## ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR RODENTS

### I. Purpose

- A. The purpose of environmental enrichment is to provide rodents opportunities to express basic behavior needs, to promote species-typical, non-injurious behavior and promote physical and mental health thus enhancing animal welfare. The environmental enrichment should be biologically relevant (i.e. hiding, socializing, searching) so that it does not lose its enriching values over time.

### II. Responsibility

- A. The LARAC staff members are responsible for providing enrichment to rodents.

### III. Procedures

- A. Social contact
  - 1. Pair- or group-house rodents unless one of the following circumstances arises:
    - a. The animals are incompatible
    - b. The animals are on a protocol in which the IACUC has approved single housing
    - c. The animals are isolated for medical reasons by the veterinary staff.
    - d. Pregnant females based on strain disposition (may cannibalize young if left with males or other females, or males may kill young)
- B. Housing system
  - 1. **Note** – according to the Guide, “Animals should be housed with the goal of maximizing species-specific behaviors and minimizing stress-induced behavior.”
  - 2. House rodents in solid-bottomed cages with contact bedding, unless specifically described in a protocol and approved by the IACUC.
  - 3. Minimal space recommendations for standard rodent cages
    - a. Rats
      - 1) 3 rats if <300 grams
      - 2) 2 rats if >300 grams
    - b. Mice
      - 1) Up to 5 mice per cage
- C. Dietary enrichment
  - 1. No dietary enrichment is routinely provided.
  - 2. Provide rodents with dietary supplementation, as allowed by the principal investigator, as positive reinforcement.

D. Objects

1. Nesting material
  - a. Provide nesting material (e.g., Nestlet) in every cage, unless specifically described in a protocol and approved by the IACUC.
  - b. New nesting material will be provided with each total changeout.
  - c. If protocol permit, provide at least one of the following:
    - 1) Shelter
    - 2) Plastic tube
    - 3) Running wheel