POLICY

The space recommendations provided in the Guide for Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (2011) are the default standard for the IACUC’s policy on appropriate caging densities. Standards have been designed to ensure that mice are housed in a manner that promotes their health and well-being and avoids overcrowding.

Cage overcrowding usually occurs in mouse breeding colonies when litters are not weaned on time, excessive number of breeder animals are housed in a small cage, or weanling mice are not separated as they get older. Breeding cages exceeding the listed limits are considered to be overcrowded cages.

Preventive measures can be taken to avoid an overcrowded cage by weaning animals in a timely manner and/or by removing dams prior to giving birth. The capacity is set to reduce the incidence of morbidity and mortality due to trampling by older animals in the cage. Because of the health concern, overcrowded cages are considered to be an animal welfare issue. In cases when overcrowding is posing obvious distress to an animal(s), research personnel will be contacted immediately and if there is no response or they are unable to respond, the animal care staff will separate the animals immediately.

Exceptions to this policy are considered to be an exception to the Guide and require a written request submitted to the IACUC and subsequent approval by the IACUC. The exception must be based on performance standards. The exception must provide adequate scientific justification for not following the Guide and will be reported, as required, to accreditation and regulatory agencies.

REQUIREMENTS


PROCEDURE

1.0 UNMC Comparative Medicine (CM) Cage Specifications:

1.1 Super Mouse Cage - The maximum capacity for the super mouse cage, i.e., the smaller ventilated polycarbonate mouse cage, is 5 adult mice. When breeding, the maximum cage capacity is:

A. Two adult mice with no more than one litter (wean litter prior to dam giving birth again)
B. Up to 5 adults with no litters (remove each dam before she gives birth)

1.2 Large Breeding Cage – When additional space is required for breeding colonies, a larger breeding cage is available for this purpose. Space limitations within the animal holding facilities may not allow these cages to be used for routine housing of mice. When breeding, the maximum cage capacity is:

A. Up to 5 adults with no more than two litters (wean older litters prior to new litter and/or separate dams prior to giving birth)

2.0 UNMC Comparative Medicine (CM) Monitoring Procedures:

2.1 CM personnel will monitor cage density as part of their routine husbandry duties. If overcrowding is found:

A. CM personnel will mark the cage with a green “Notice of Overcrowding” card.
B. CM personnel will contact (via email and/or phone) the PI and/or lab personnel that corrective action is required.
2.2 If an overcrowded cage is not corrected within 24 hours from the date and time recorded on the notice, CM personnel will:

A. Take appropriate actions to correct the overcrowding (i.e., wean older litters, separate dams, etc.)

1) A fee will be assessed per overcrowded cage per incident for the above services.