POLICY

The UNMC/UNO IACUC promotes environmental enrichment and psychological wellbeing of all species used in research at UNMC and UNO through the use of social interaction, environmental stimulation, and exercise to enhance animal wellbeing, minimize animal stress, promote consistency and comply with regulatory requirements. Animals housed at UNMC or UNO will be provided with species appropriate opportunities to express species specific behaviors that meet or exceed regulatory requirements.

The IACUC recognizes that the environment may influence the validity and reliability of research experiments. The environment consists of physical attributes (e.g., temperature, lighting, exercise, cage specifications) as well as social interactions and dietary supplements. Opportunities to exhibit species-typical behaviors and activity will be considered and implemented within all justified scientific constraints or veterinary based limitations.

UNMC Comparative Medicine (CM) department and the UNO Animal Care Committee under the direction of the Attending Veterinarian(s) (AV) develop and maintain Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) and Guidelines which serve as the basis for the animal enrichment and/or exercise program. The SOP(s) are reviewed by the IACUC during the semiannual program review and are available to Investigators in consultation with the AV(s).

REGULATIONS

Animal Welfare Act in accordance with, (9 CFR Ch. 1), Part 3 – Subpart A 3.7 Compatible Grouping - Dogs and cats that are housed in the same primary enclosure must be compatible with all restrictions listed in 3.7 (a-e) 3.8 Exercise requirements for Dogs are specified in the AWA. Dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities must develop, document, and follow an appropriate plan to provide dogs with the opportunity for exercise. Subpart D 3.81 The AWA mandates “environment enrichment” for nonhuman primates by specifying that there must be a “program for the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates”. Dealers, exhibitors, and research facilities must develop, document, and follow an appropriate plan for environment enhancement adequate to promote the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates. The plan must be in accordance with the currently accepted professional standards as cited in appropriate professional journals or reference guides, and as directed by the attending veterinarian. This plan must be made available to APHIS upon request, and, in the case of research facilities, to officials of any pertinent funding agency. The plan, at a minimum must address each of the following: (a) Social Grouping, (b) Environmental Enrichment, (c) Special Considerations, (d) Restraint Devices, (e) Exemptions.

The Guide 1996 1) "A good management program provides the environment, housing, and care that permit animals to grow, mature, reproduce, and maintain good health; provides for their well-being; and minimizes variations that can affect research results.” 2) "Animals should be housed with the goal of maximizing species-specific behaviors and minimizing stress-induced behaviors." 3) "Depending on the animal species and use, the structural environment should include resting boards, shelves or perches, toys, foraging devices, nesting materials, tunnels, swings, or other objects that increase opportunities for the expression of species-typical postures and activities and enhance the animals' well-being.” 4) "Consideration should be given to an animal’s social needs. The social environment usually involves physical contact and communication among members of the same species (conspecifics), although it can include non-contact communication among individuals through visual, auditory, and olfactory signals.”
The Public Health Service (PHS) Policy in accordance with USGP I and VII, and other applicable Federal laws, guidelines, and policies.

PROCEDURES

1.0 Environmental enrichment and/or exercise plans will be implemented as applicable for animals in all research protocols.

2.0 Exemptions from enrichment and/or exercise for scientific reasons should be documented and justified in the protocol and specifically reviewed and approved by the IACUC.

3.0 Exemptions from enrichment or exercise for reasons related to a health condition or wellbeing can be authorized by the AV(s).

3.1 For USDA covered species, the exemption must be reviewed by the AV(s) at least every 30 days to renew it or cancel it, unless the basis for the exemption is a permanent condition.

A. The exemption and rationale must be documented by the AV(s) and maintained in a medical record near the animal’s housing.