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HOUSING OF SOCIAL SPECIES

1 Policy statements

This policy outlines the standards and expectations relating to housing social animals. In accordance with the *Guide*, social animals should be housed in compatible pairs or groups. Social housing should be the default for social species, although care must be taken to ensure that animals are socially compatible. In the University, social housing is the default scheme, unless otherwise justified and approved for experimental purposes, because of social incompatibility or veterinary concerns about animal well-being.

2 Definitions

Social species	Animals that are genetically inclined to group together and form a particular set of rules defining interactions between individuals.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all social species used for research, testing and teaching in NUS.

4 Guidelines

4.1 Exemptions

Social housing (in pairs or groups) is the default housing arrangement. Exemptions are permitted for the following circumstances:

1. Temporarily for up to 21 days, after surgical procedures.*
2. Pregnant females
3. Male breeders, in between mating periods
4. Last remaining animal in a cage, due to death or utilisation of cage mates
5. Social incompatibility, e.g. aggression, intact (uncastrated) adult male pigs
6. Intact (uncastrated) adult male rabbits
7. Veterinary concern as determined by a CM veterinarian

** A CM veterinarian may extend or shorten this period if clinically warranted.*

When single housing is necessary, it must be limited to the minimum period necessary. Where possible, animals should be offered additional environmental enrichment.

The individual housing arrangement must be re-assessed periodically to determine whether resumption of social housing is possible. Permanently individually housed animals must be assessed regularly for health and behavioural well-being.

4.2 IACUC protocol requirements and justifications

Other requests for single housing of social species, due to scientific or experimental necessity, must be included in the IACUC protocol, justified, and approved before being implemented. The protocol must identify the following:

1. Reasons or scientific justifications
2. Duration of single housing
3. Whether visual, auditory, olfactory or tactile contact with compatible conspecifics would be provided
4. Reasons if enrichment cannot be provided

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4.3 Social Housing of NHPs

Non-human primates (NHPs) are recognised as having highly developed mental and emotional capacities, more so than most other animals used in biomedical research. In many ways, they are similar to humans and exhibit many similar external manifestations of emotions such as vocalisations, postures, gestures, and reactions.

Social Housing must be considered the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility, veterinary concerns, or scientific necessity approved by the IACUC. When groups or pairs are being formed, observers must adjust group composition so the units show minimal aggression.

Because of the importance of vision to the NHP, cages should be positioned so that the NHPs can see conspecifics. Solid-sided caging prevents visual contact. If physical contact is possible, there must be assurance that the animals are compatible.

Interaction between the NHP and the researcher or staff is encouraged but it should not be forced. The interaction, however, must not involve handling other than what is necessary for investigational procedures. Where single housing is necessary, interaction with people takes on added importance.

5 References

1. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. National Research Council, 2011.
2. Guidelines on the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. National Advisory Committee for Laboratory Animal Research. 2022
3. AAALAC position statement, 2018. Social Housing. Retrieved from https://aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm#social

6 Related polices/SOPs

1. IACUC policy P204 ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT
2. IACUC policy P205 ANIMAL HOUSING DENSITY
3. CM SOP 540: Environmental enrichment
4. CM SOP 541: Social housing of rabbits and guinea pigs
5. CM SOP 542: Social housing of pigs
6. CM SOP 544: Social housing of mice and rats
7. CM SOP 546: Social housing of Cynomolgus macaques
8. CM SOP 548: Behavioural management of singly housed NHP

Revision	Author	IACUC approval date
Last reviewed	Dr Lee Liying Corinne	18 July 2018
P203.01 Reviewed to: 1. ensure policies are in compliance with the NACLAR Guidelines 2022 and the updated Animals and Birds (Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes) Rules 2004; and 2. up-to-date with current practices Changes made: 1. added the sentence “Social housing should be the default for social species, although care must be taken to ensure that animals are socially compatible”; and 2. added section 4.3 Social Housing of NHPs; and 3. updated section 4.1. "When single housing is necessary, it **must** be limited to the minimum period necessary.” from “should” to “must” 4. under section 5, updated to "Guidelines on the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes. National Advisory Committee for Laboratory Animal Research. 2022"	Dr Chew Li Li IACUC	3 January 2023

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