

TITLE: Group, Pair and Social Housing Policy	APPROVED: December 12, 2012
IACUC POLICY: 006 REVISION: 1	REVISED: March 13, 2021
SCOPE: This policy applies to the housing of social species.	
KEYWORDS: housing, social animals, incompatibility, stable pairs	
Policy Owner: Office of Research Integrity Assurance (ORIA)	
Policy Contact: Mary Beran, Director, mberan3@gatech.edu or IACUC@gatech.edu	

1. BACKGROUND:

The 8th edition of *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)* contains many statements about social housing that are summarized in “Social animals should be housed in stable pairs or groups of compatible individuals unless they must be housed alone for experimental reasons or because of social incompatibility.” A definition of social animal is not provided.

2. POLICY:

Animals are housed in pairs or groups of compatible individuals unless they must be housed alone for medical or experimental reasons or because of incompatibility. Examples where animals may be single housed include but are not limited to:

- Mice that fight until wounds or death results
- Mice that excessively barber cage mates
- Adult male mice that have been singly housed for a period are not returned to social housing even with littermates due to aggression
- Rabbits received as unneutered adults. (Although intact adult female littermate rabbits might be compatible, information about relatedness cannot be provided by vendors in part because rabbits are not individually identified by vendors)
- Post-operative animals for 10-14 days after surgery or permanently for adult male mice
- Animals with head caps or other devices on the outside of their bodies
- Animals requiring IACUC-approved special diets or special watering or feeding regimens when group housing might undermine the intention
- Pregnant animals when research requires precise timing relative to time of birth or conception

This policy documents that the institution has fulfilled the intent of the *Guide* “should” statement regarding social housing. Singly housing due to animal health and safety requirements is a deviation from a “should” statement according to a specifically established exception in the *Guide* (social incompatibility) and is not a departure from the *Guide*. Singly housing due to research requirements is a deviation from a “should” statement according to a specifically established exception in the *Guide* (experimental reasons). Exceptions are not departures from the *Guide* and as such need not be reported to the Institutional Official (IO) in the semiannual report.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. GT IACUC - review protocols and modifications to protocols to ensure consistency with the provisions of this policy.

- B. GT ORIA - provide resources and guidance to the IACUC, animal research investigators, and care staff on current regulatory requirements involving the housing of social animals.
- C. PI and research team members - ensure social housing meets the provisions described in this policy.

4. REFERENCES:

The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Chapter 4, Pg 114; Appendix A, Pg 198) (ILAR, NCR, 8th Ed.) <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Guide-for-the-care-and-use-of-Laboratory-animals.pdf>

Single Housing for Social Species

- o *Guide, p 64:* The *Guide* states that single housing should be justified for social species. Additionally, Social animals should be housed in stable pairs or groups of compatible individuals unless they must be housed alone for experimental reasons or because of social incompatibility (page 51).

OLAW: Departures from the Guide <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/departures.htm> and http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/121004_Brown_slides.pdf

OLAW FAQ#7: 7.What are PHS Policy reporting requirements for departures from the Guide? <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/faqs.htm#c7>

OLAW Seminar Series: Departures form the Guide – September 13, 2012, revised October 4, 2012. http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/121004_Brown_slides.pdf

OLAW Webinar Transcript with Additional Answers to Questions Submitted After the Webinar http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/121004_seminar_transcript.pdf

REVISION HISTORY:

Revision Number	Summary of Revisions	Revision Date
1	Update reference link	March 10, 2015