



LABORATORY ANIMAL SERVICES OVERCROWDING GUIDELINES

Guildline No: **MSAH #76**

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Version: **A**

Reviewed: **20/06/2012**

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Laboratory Animal Services staff change rodent cages minimum once per fortnight and check rodent cages minimum once per week while maintaining animals in accordance to the approved stocking densities. Overcrowding of cages can cause ethical and humane concerns for the animals as they are subjected to increased ammonia levels (urination), faecal contamination and physiological distress.

Animals must not exceed the recommended Housing guidelines set out in the *MSAH #35 Cage Stocking Densities Standard Operating Procedures*. You will also need to familiarise yourself with the *Rodent Breeding and Weaning Policy* if you are breeding your rodents.

If animal services staff find cages to be overcrowded the following will take place:

1. Cage will be marked with an “Orange Card” stating that the cage is overcrowded and that LAS have separated the overcrowded cage.
2. Laboratory Animal Services will separate the overcrowded cage immediately.
3. A minimum of 15 minutes technical assistance fee will be charged to the researcher. If over 15 minutes is required to separate the cage(s), including to writing up of the new cage card, the technical assistance charged will be the total time required.
4. If a breeding trio has a particularly large litter, LAS will notify the Researcher and suggest the female breeders are separated. The Animal Welfare Officer will be consulted if the Researcher disagrees with LAS option.

If Researchers disagree with the need to separate animals, they should consult the Facility Coordinator. All litters over 23days of age are considered overcrowded and action in the Breeding and Weaning policy will take place, unless prior extension has been given for late weaning by the Animal Welfare Officer or prior notification from the Researcher has been received by the Facility Coordinator.

REFERENCES

Guidelines correspond with recommendations from the “Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Laboratory Mice, Rats, Guinea Pigs and Rabbits”

Original 2003, Endorsed by the AEC at its meeting on 26.06.2003

Revision 2010 endorsed by the AEC at its meeting on 09.12.2010

Revision 2012 endorsed by the AEC at its meeting on 04.12.2012

Document	MSAH#76 Overcrowding Guidelines	Effective Date:	20/06/2012	Version A
Authorised by:	Branch Manager & AWO			
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