



University Committee on Animal Care

Policy on Rodent Cage Overpopulation

To ensure institutional compliance with the NRC "Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals", DLAR animal care technicians routinely perform cage population density surveillance. Litters are usually weaned at 21 days of age with the exception of those strains where offspring may not be as hardy and where prior approval was granted by the UCAC to extend this period. P.I. maintained breeding or grouping of rodents must also adhere to the regulations. Overcrowding places ETSU in violation of regulatory guidelines and induces unnecessary stress on the animals.

Procedure:

Investigators should check on their animal colonies frequently and should be aware of upcoming weaning dates. Any cages identified as overcrowded by DLAR will be marked with a yellow "Overcrowding Notification" card. No additional method of notification will be initiated. The P.I. will then have 48 hours (from the time the card was placed on the cage/or cages) to correct the situation. If the P.I. is unable to correct the situation within the 48 hour grace period, the DLAR will separate the animals into the appropriate number of cages required to meet guidelines. The P.I. will be billed a \$10.00 service charge and an \$8.00 per cage set up fee. For example, if pups are older than 21 days and have not yet been weaned, two cages will be used to separate males and females and the P.I. will be charged a minimum of \$26.00. Charges may be significantly higher with large litters, skewed gender ratios, or multiple cages requiring weaning.

Current Guidelines:

- No more than five adult mice may be housed in a cage. Other rodent species will be housed by body weight to floor space ratio as defined in the "Guide".
- One dam with a litter is acceptable in each cage. Multiple dams with multiple litters per cage are not acceptable. Be sure to watch for multiple pregnant females and separate BEFORE giving birth. This will also prevent older pups from trampling the newborn pups.
- Two adults per cage with a litter. Example: dam and male (monogamous pair) with litter, or occasionally it is necessary with some fragile strains to have an "aunt" with the litter (again, be sure and separate a known pregnant female aunt late in pregnancy to avoid multiple litters per cage).

Exemptions to this policy require UCAC approval.

Approved by the ETSU University Committee on Animal Care: October 20, 2005

Revised and approved: November 9, 2021