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Standard Operating Procedure

1. Purpose

To outline the minimum standards of care for rabbits based on the Public Health Service Policy and the ILAR *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*.

2. Scope

All units providing animal care for rabbits must meet or exceed these minimum requirements.

3. Responsibilities

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring that animal care units housing animals that are used in their Animal Care and Use Protocols (AUPs) are complying with this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

4. Procedure

Daily (365 days a year without exception):

- Feed each animal based on requirements for the condition and size of the animal.
- Rabbit chow must be used within 6 months of the milling date unless manufacturer guidelines recommend a shorter or longer expiration date.
- Provide sufficient potable water.
- Change heavily soiled or flooded cages and/or drop pans.
- Observe each animal and check for health concerns.
- Record and report sick or dead animals in accordance with Daily Observation SOP (AV 20-105).
- Record minimum and maximum temperatures (ideal room temperature range for rabbits is 61-72°F).
- Keep the animal housing room clean and organized.
- Record completion of daily room tasks, initial and date.
- Automatic watering systems (lixits) must be check daily.
- Wire hanging cages without drop pans: floors must be hosed daily to remove excreta.

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Weekly:

- Provide clean water bottles and sipper tubes at least every week (not to exceed 7 days).
- Provide clean drop pans with clean bedding at least once per week (not to exceed 7 days).

Biweekly:

- Provide clean rabbit cages and racks at least every two weeks (not to exceed 14 days).
- Change and provide clean feeders at least every two weeks (not to exceed 14 days).
- Clean and change environmental enrichment at least every two weeks (not to exceed 14 days).

Quarterly:

- Disinfect the animal room (includes walls, floors, and ceilings).

Identification:

- Rabbits must be individually identified in addition to having an appropriately labeled cage card (refer to SOP for Identification of Animals, AV 20-106).
- Rabbits can be permanently identified with an ear tag, ear tattoo, non-toxic marker, or microchip. If rabbits are microchipped, the microchip reader must be readily available and functional.

Social Housing:

- Female rabbits that will be housed longer than 6 months are required to be socially housed.

Environmental Enrichment:

- Refer to SOP for Environmental Enrichment (AV 30-102).
- Rabbits should be provided with the ability to demonstrate species-typical behaviors. Some examples of appropriate enrichment for rabbits include: Nylabones, plastic balls, wood blocks (on chains or floor cage), nesting boxes, exercise pens, and oat hay.
- Devices used for environmental enrichment must be easily sanitized or disposable with cage changes.
- Devices must be checked regularly for wear and discarded when safety hazards are present.

Facilities:

- Refer to Standard Operating Procedure for Facilities Maintenance (AV 50-102).



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- If room temperature falls outside of the ideal range for longer than a brief period, Campus Services must be contacted.
- Minimum of 10-15 fresh room air exchanges.
- Indoor housing facilities for rabbits shall be adequately ventilated to provide for the health and comfort of the animal at all times. Such facilities shall be provided with fresh air either by means of windows, doors, vents, or air conditioning and shall be ventilated so as to minimize drafts, odor, and moisture condensation. Auxiliary ventilation, such as exhaust fans and vents or air conditioning, shall be provided when ambient temperature is 85°F or higher.
- Floors should be moisture-resistant, nonabsorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth.

Caging:

- Recommended floor space per rabbit:

Weight (kg)	Floor Area/Animal (ft ²)	Height (inches)
<2	1.5	16
Up to 4	3.0	16
Up to 5.4	4.0	16
>5.4	≥5.0	16

- Larger rabbits may require more cage height to allow animals to sit up.
- Facilities must provide specific cage dimensions for size and number of animals to be housed.
- Caging must be in good condition and free of any damage that may cause injury.

Euthanasia:

- Veterinary staff may euthanize sick animals following approved methods in the current *AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia*.

5. References

1. Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources: Guide for the Care and use of Laboratory Animals, National Academy Press, Eighth Edition (http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12910).
2. Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations. United States Department of Agriculture, 2013

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(https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Animal%20Care%20Blue%20Book%20-%202013%20-%20FINAL.pdf).

3. National Institutes of Health: Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/phspol.htm>).
4. The Federation of Animal Science Societies: Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching, 3rd Edition, 2010 (http://www.fass.org/docs/agguide3rd/Ag_Guide_3rd_ed.pdf).
5. AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2013 Edition (<https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Documents/euthanasia.pdf>).

6. **Definitions**

1. **AV** – Attending Veterinarian – responsible for the health and well-being of all laboratory animals used at the institution
2. **AVMA** – American Veterinary Medical Association – a not-for-profit organization for advancing the science and practice of veterinary medicine to improve animal and human health
3. **SOP** – Standard Operating Procedure – established or prescribed methods to be followed routinely for the performance of designated operations or in designated situations
4. **IACUC** – Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee – responsible for assessment and oversight of the institution’s animal care program components and facilities
5. **Chair** – Chairperson of the IACUC
6. **PI** – Principal Investigator – a Central Oregon Community College employee having the background and training in scientific and administrative oversight necessary to conduct and manage the proposed study
7. **AUP** – Animal Care and Use Protocol – protocol created by the principal investigator of the proposed research, testing, or educational study
8. **Protocol** – Animal Care and Use Protocol – protocol created by the principal investigator of the proposed research, testing, or educational study
9. **COCC** – Central Oregon Community College
10. **Guide** – the *Guide for the Care and use of Laboratory Animals*
11. **AWA** – Animal Welfare Act – requires that minimum standards of care and treatment be provided for certain animals bred for commercial sale, used in research, transported commercially, or exhibited to the public
12. **PHS** – Public Health Service – establishes guidelines for the proper care of animals to be used in research
13. **Clinical veterinarian** – the Attending Veterinarian or designee



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Revision	Author	Revisions Made	Effective Date	Approval
1	Cindy Elston	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New SOP	10/14/16	Cindy Elston (AV)
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