Standard Operating Procedure

1. **Purpose**

To describe the requirements for the social housing of social animals.

2. **Scope**

Pertains to all animal units housing social species. Social species include: nonhuman primates, dogs, cats (excluding intact male cats), pigs (excluding boars), sheep, goats, cattle (excluding bulls), horses (excluding stallions), alpacas, llamas, rabbits (excludes bucks and excludes does kept for less than 6 months), ferrets, rodents (excluding adult male mice and female hamsters), marsupials, chickens (excluding roosters), psittacines, quail, ducks, turkeys, fish (excludes male Bettas), and songbirds.

3. **Prerequisites**

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* states “Appropriate social interactions among members of the same species (conspecifics) are essential to normal development and well-being... Single housing of social species should be the exception and justified based on experimental requirements or veterinary-related concerns about animal well-being. In these cases, it should be limited to the minimum period necessary, and where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided... The need for single housing should be reviewed on a regular basis by the IACUC and veterinarian.”

4. **Responsibilities**

Each facility housing social animals must develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for social housing and include a description of the process for determining social incompatibility. This SOP must be approved by the attending veterinarian (AV).

5. **Procedure**

Social housing refers to housing animals in same sex, compatible pairs or groups in the animals’ primary enclosure.
Social housing will be considered the default method of housing for social animals. Single housing for experimental reasons must be described and justified in the animal care and use protocol (AUP) and approved by the IACUC. Single housing for veterinary reasons or because of social incompatibility must be documented in the animal's medical record or cage card.

General Procedures:

- Social animals will be housed in compatible pairs or groups, rather than individually, unless a single housing exemption has been approved in the relevant protocol or social housing poses an undue risk to the animals in question as determined by the facility manager and/or the attending veterinarian.
- If the protocol-driven need for single housing is necessary only for a portion of the study, the animals should be socially housed before and after that time.
- Single housing of social animals post-operatively does not require a specific exemption approval in the relevant protocol. However, single housing must be for the minimum amount of time post-operatively necessary for recovery and/or healing as described in the animal care and use protocol.
- Single housing for pre-anesthetic fasting does not require an exemption.
- When social animals must be housed singly, conspecifics should be housed in visual, olfactory, and/or tactile range whenever possible.
- When animals are left singly housed due to attrition of cage mates on study, or uneven experimental group sizes, consideration should be given to re-housing with other conspecifics when possible depending upon the expected duration of the study. When re-pairing is not possible without disruption of the study, singly housing is acceptable for the remainder of the study.
- When social animals must be housed singly, environmental and/or food enrichment, exercise/release into larger enclosure, and/or human interaction shall be provided unless scientifically contraindicated.
- Husbandry staff, veterinary staff, and the IACUC are expected to monitor for single housing instances and ensure that single housing is approved in the relevant protocol.

6. References


AV 30-103 Social Housing
7. **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. **COCN** – 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

