

Mission

The University of Rochester is committed to ensuring the humane and appropriate care of its research animals. To this end, animal husbandry and care complies with all federal regulations while also offering a dynamic environmental enrichment program, behavioral health monitoring, and positive reinforcement training. These programs seek to promote the physical and psychological well-being of research animals in ways that do not compromise animal health and safety, personnel safety, or the goals of the research. As such, environmental enrichment that does not interfere with research results will be provided to all laboratory animals. Exemptions from the environmental enrichment and social housing plans must be scientifically justified and approved by UCAR.

Environmental Enrichment

According to the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, “The primary aim of environmental enrichment is to enhance animal well-being by providing animals with sensory and motor stimulation through structures and resources that facilitate the expression of species-typical behaviors and promote psychological well-being through physical exercise, manipulative activities, and cognitive challenges according to species specific characteristics” (NCR, 2011). Furthermore, appropriate enrichment activities provide animals with choices within their environments which promotes overall behavioral health.

At the University of Rochester enrichment activities include social interaction for social species, structural and manipulative resources, a variety of edible enrichment items, and sensory enhancements. Positive reinforcement training is also available to establish husbandry and medical behaviors, cooperation, or to foster positive human-animal interactions. The following are types of enrichment strategies employed at the university; however, the examples provided are only meant to be illustrative and by means encompasses all available options.

- Social housing is the default practice for social species – rodents, non-human primates, dogs, cats, and agricultural animals. Single housing must be scientifically justified and approved by UCAR or be due to incompatibility, no available partner, or medical reasons.
- Structural and manipulative enhancements include perches, climbing structures, shelters, destructible items (e.g., cardboard tubes and boxes), toys, nesting material, natural wood sticks, puzzle feeders etc.
- Edible enrichments include fresh produce, browse, and commercially available treats such as peanuts, seeds, and dried fruit.
- Sensory enhancements include music, nature sounds, or DVDs.

For more information about the university’s environmental enrichment and behavioral health services please contact the Animal Resource office.

Social housed mice photograph courtesy of <https://awionline.org/>
Mouse house photograph courtesy of <http://www.lbs-biotech.com/>
Primate Primahedron photograph courtesy of <http://www.primatproducts.com/>

