

Animal Enrichment & Behavior Management Program



University
of Rochester



Sheep showing off their artistic creation! Painting offers a unique way to provide enrichment for our animals while also fostering a positive human-animal bond.

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

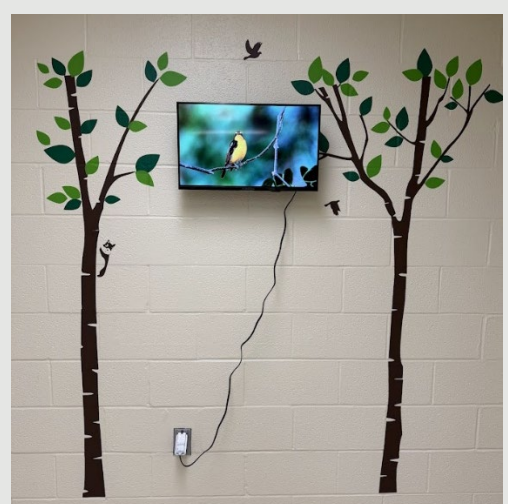
According to the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, “The primary aim of environmental enrichment is to enhance animal well-being by providing animals with sensory and motor stimulation through structures and resources that facilitate the expression of species-typical behaviors and promote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

Enrichment improves welfare, reduces stress, and leads to more reliable, reproducible, and scientifically valid research outcomes. It allows animals to express natural behaviors like foraging, nesting, exploring and interacting with conspecifics. Providing opportunities for animals to engage in species appropriate behavior through enrichment increases physical activity and mental engagement making them better models for human studies.



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. The following are types of enrichment strategies employed at the university; however, the examples provided are only meant to be illustrative and by no means encompasses all available options.

- Social housing is the default practice for social species – rodents, nonhuman primates, birds, fish, agricultural animals etc. 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 enrichment includes fresh produce, browse, and commercially available treats such as peanuts, seeds, and dried fruit.
- Sensory enhancements include music, nature sounds, or TVs.



Behavioral Management

Positive Reinforcement Training

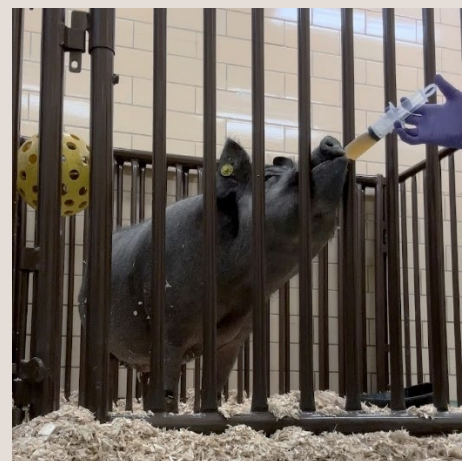
Positive reinforcement training helps the animals voluntarily participate in their own care and research. This leads to a reduction in stress while also increasing program efficiency, animal safety and welfare.

The behaviorist is available to assist staff with training animals for research, veterinary or husbandry related concerns. This includes socialization, restraint, transport, voluntary injections, medication compliance etc.

Behavior Assessments & Monitoring

Behavioral monitoring provides an opportunity to gather information concerning activity budgets, abnormal behavior, compatibility with social partners, and effectiveness of interventions. This is accomplished through in-person observations, video monitoring and welfare assessments.

Other behavioral services offered include preference assessments (reinforcers, food/fluids, enrichment), temperament and compatibility assessments.



For any questions concerning the enrichment and behavior management program, please contact the Animal Resource office, DCM or the Behaviorist directly.

Angelika Rehrig, M.S., LATG
Animal Behaviorist
Senior Research Program Specialist

Angelika_Rehrig@urmc.rochester.edu