

UCAR Policy on NIH Noncompliance: Overcrowded Rodent Cage

Updated and Approved by UCAR 6/21/23

Objective: The objective is to maintain the University of Rochester's Assurance with PHS/NIH. NIH requires that PHS assured institutions comply with all standards of the NIH *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. Exemptions to the *Guide* must be scientifically justified by the Principal Investigator and approved by UCAR.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to describe a UCAR approved process for correcting investigators' rodent breeding colony practices which lead to overcrowded cages.

Standard: The *Guide's* housing specifications are documented in the UCAR Rodent Density policy. ([Mouse Cage Density](#), [Rat Cage Density](#))

Prevention: UCAR policy requires that all investigators and staff directly involved with managing breeding colonies of rodents complete the "Breeding Colony Management" class as a condition of UCAR approval of the protocol or modification to add personnel. To address the immediate welfare risk posed by breeding cages containing more than one litter, vivarium animal care staff will separate all animals that are old/large enough to be weaned into a single cage upon identifying the overcrowded cage. The lab will be notified of this action by e-mail and is responsible for sexing and separating the weanlings.

Corrective Actions for Noncompliance:

Step 1: If an investigators' lab has more than two overcrowded cages reported per month over a 6 month period or greater than 2% of his/her total inventory, UCAR will notify the Principal Investigator of the noncompliance. All staff will undergo retraining by re-taking the online Rodent Colony Management training. The PI will submit a written assurance that he/she will oversee the laboratory practices to maintain compliance. If compliance is not maintained over the next 6 months, the PI will understand that Step 2 will take place.

Step 2: The noncompliance issue will be discussed at a committee meeting, during which potential action plans will be determined. The solution will include specific changes in practice required by UCAR. If noncompliance persists over 6 months, Step 3 will take place. Since PHS considers over-crowded cages to pose animal welfare risk and be significant noncompliance UCAR may notify PHS of the ongoing noncompliance.

Step 3: UCAR repeats the notification process above and mandates that breeding ceases or that all breeding be managed by the DCM veterinary staff at a charge to the PI over 3 months in synchrony with training research staff. The PI will have an opportunity after the 3-month training to apply to UCAR for breeding privileges with assurances to meet policy requirements.