



POLICY: Social Housing of Multiple Species of Rodents in One Room

Objective:	To describe housing of two or more rodent species in one room
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I. **Background**

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (2011, National Academy Press, Washington, DC) states:

“Physical separation of animals by species is recommended to prevent disease transmission and to eliminate anxiety and possible physiologic and behavioral changes due to interspecies conflict. Such separation is usually accomplished by housing different species in separate rooms, but in some instances, it may be possible with cubicles, laminar-flow units, cages that have filtered air or separate ventilation, and isolators. It may also be acceptable to house different species in the same room—for example, two species that have a similar pathogen status and are behaviorally compatible (Pritchett-Corning et. al. 2009, pg. 111).”

Therefore, when small numbers of different species are housed together to optimize space use, species separation (aside from rooms) may be appropriate. This is especially true if cage change order is prioritized.

II. **Policy**

1. Rats and mice can be housed under filter topped or ventilated rack caging in the same Animal Biosafety Level 2 (ABSL-2) or General Use rodent room only when separate rooms are not available.
2. Gerbils, guinea pigs, chinchillas, rats and mice can be housed together in one or more ventilated racks when other rooms are not available. Hamsters can also be housed in this fashion assuming proper order of cage changes.
3. Whenever possible, ventilated rack caging is preferred when multiple species are housed in one room.
4. Personnel must strictly adhere to ABSL-2 practices as warranted by the situation. All animal manipulations must be conducted within a certified Class II biological safety cabinet or equivalent cage-change station.
 - a. Additionally, rodent cages must contain biohazard markings, and a biohazard sign must be posted at the entrance to the room identifying: the infectious agent(s) in use; protective clothing to be worn; and any special requirements for entry (e.g., immunization or respirators, the principal investigator’s name and telephone number, and the name and telephone number of the facility supervisor.

5. The research staff must notify the Director, Laboratory Animal Resources that any experiment with hazards (biological, radiological, chemical, etc.) is taking place so that the room will be appropriately posted with biohazard information and the Vivarium staff notified of the hazard.
 - a. This is particularly important if different researchers share the same room because restrictions may affect the work and movements of others.
 - b. Use of all hazardous materials must be approved by the IACUC, EHS, and IBC prior to study initiation.

III. **References**

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- Pritchett-Corning KR, FT Chang, MFW Festing. 2009. Breeding and Housing Laboratory Rats and Mice in the Same Room Does Not Affect the Growth or Reproduction of Either Species.
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Revision History

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Re-approved May 18, 2015; April 23, 2018; January 25, 2021

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