Institutional Animal Care & Use Program - UTEP	
Title: Social and Behavioral Management and Environmental Enrichment of Research Animals	
Policy#: 014	**Date in Effect**: 27 February 2015
Version #: C	**Rev Date**: 24 March 2025
In Effect ☒ **Rescinded** ☐	**Date Rescinded**:

A) RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all personnel using animals at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to abide by this policy. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) when good justification is provided to deviate from this policy.

B) APPLICATION

To maintain the mental welfare of animals in research, animals housed at UTEP will be afforded at least one form of enrichment and be housed in compatible groups.

C) BACKGROUND

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, the *Guide*, states that, "Appropriate social interactions among members of the same species (conspecifics) are essential to normal development and well–being". Social housing of animals is the default housing environment at the UTEP. Single housing of social species must be justified based on experimental requirements. Laboratory Animal Resource Center (LARC) veterinary staff may also require individual housing of animals due to medical concerns.

The IACUC considers demonstrated incompatibility within social groups, proven male aggression, a pregnant female or female with a litter, short term (less than 1 week) recovery from surgical manipulation, or metabolic studies to be grounds for separation for protection of animals or experimental procedures. Such circumstantial conditions do not require a formal variance in the IACUC protocol. Justification for a variance from communal housing for reasons other than those noted above must be submitted for review and approval by the IACUC as part of a new or continuing application or via an amendment. Individuals from species that are not socially housed should be provided

with additional enrichment. If single housing is required, it should be limited to the minimum period necessary.

The *Guide* states: "The primary aim of environmental enrichment is to enhance animals' well-being… according to species-specific characteristics". The availability of suitable enrichment devices and practices within the primary enclosure aids in achieving this goal. All research animals at UTEP will receive environmental enrichment unless an exception has been approved in writing by the IACUC. Enrichment materials or practices must be designed and applied in accordance with the *Guide*, in order to enhance the opportunities for the animals to express species specific behavior.

E) GUIDELINES

Enrichment Material	Mouse	Rat	Zebrafish
Nesting Material	S	S	N/A
Social Housing	S	S	S
Igloos/Huts/Tubes	E	E	N/A
Forging Material/treats	E	E	N/A
Nylabone/chew toy	E	E	N/A
Elevate platform	E	E	N/A
Manipulanda (rotated)	N/A	E	N/A
Live feed (e.g. brine shrimp)	N/A	N/A	S

S = Standard Enrichment all animals receive unless scientifically justified in an approved protocol.
E = Extra enrichment which could be provided (outline below)
N/A = not applicable to species
*If organism is not listed on the policy, to contact the attending veterinarian for a consultation, may refer to the Guide for recommendation

1) Enrichment
    a) Enrichment items are reviewed by the veterinarian prior to being placed into rotation for the animals.
        i. All species should receive the standard enrichment items described above unless justified in the IACUC protocol.
        ii. All enrichment items will be regularly inspected for safety and appropriately sanitized.
        iii. Provision of extra enrichment should be based on the following circumstances:
            1. Single housing (extra enrichment required)

2. Veterinary recommendation (e.g. stereotypic behavior, fighting, barbering)
3. Breeding concerns (must be documented)

c) If an animal is single housed, extra enrichment should be provided.

i. Extra enrichment will vary by species and can be one of the items listed in the table above as extra enrichment or an additional standard enrichment item.

Review History	
Revision Version:	**Revision Date**:
A	27 February 2015
B	23 March 2020
C	24 March 2025