

## LARC Policy on Overcrowded Cages

Purpose: To ensure that animals are maintained at federally regulated densities in cages.

History: In some investigators' breeding colonies, overcrowding of cages is common. It occurs most frequently when trio or harem mating systems are used and each of the females has a litter. The problem becomes severe when the litters are not weaned according to the procedures define in the approved protocol (21-28 days of age).

### I. Definitions of Overcrowding

- 2 litters in the same cage. These will be weaned **immediately** to prevent trampling of neonates.
- 1 litter and dam with an additional pregnant dam(s) in the same cage.
- Multiple visibly pregnant females in the same cage.
- More than 5 mice older than 21 days in the same cage (the day of birth is considered day 1 – this is the IACUC's policy).

### II. Researcher Responsibilities:

- 1) The PI on a breeding protocol has **ultimate responsibility** to ensure the colony is managed appropriately. This means the PI or the PI's staff has day-to-day responsibility to check on breeding pairs for new births, to wean when appropriate, and to maintain colony records.
- 2) House all animals appropriately and according to PI's IACUC protocol to avoid overcrowded cages.
- 3) Respond to cages marked as overcrowded within 48 hours by splitting cages appropriately or making contact with LARC to discuss the issue.

#### LARC Responsibilities:

- 1) LARC will complete daily health checks.
- 2) LARC will mark overcrowded cages with a colored Concern card.
- 3) LARC will give investigative staff 2 business days (when possible) to correct the overcrowding.
- 4) If the investigative staff fails to correct the overcrowding, LARC will split the cages in question to comply with OLAW, Guide, and AAALAC housing guidelines. **The PI will be charged a minimum of \$75 according to the rate schedule:**

\$25 for a new cage for the parents

\$25 for *each* cage of offspring (typically one cage of males, one cage of females)

The LARC will note that the cages were separated and the number of new cages on the back of the census sheet. The census sheet will be returned to the LARC front office for billing at the end of the month.

- 5) The LARC will be more than happy to help or facilitate the necessary actions but should not be relied upon to manage breeding colonies unless there is a prior agreement with the LARC in place.
- 6) The LARC is required to report patterns of overcrowding to the IACUC.