



## Animal Facility SOP 33.2

### Separation of Rodents for Overcrowding or Fighting

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#### I. Purpose

Describes when animals will be separated for overcrowding or fighting.

#### II. Scope

All personnel using or caring for animals in the animal research facility are responsible for following this SOP.

#### III. Rodent Cage Density Allowances

These are based on The “Guide For the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals”  
<http://www.nap.edu/read/12910/chapter/1>

#### Group Housing

Animals will be observed daily for fighting or overcrowding. The Maximum mice >21 days of age (28 days if approved in the protocol) per cage is 5. The maximum number of rats per cage (124 sq in for blueline IVC cages) is determined by weight according to the table below.

100g	7
200g	5
300g	4
400g	3
500g	2
>500g	1

Mice should be housed in multiples whenever possible. If an animal must be single housed, place cage card notation to indicate the reason and include enrichment.

#### Breeding

1. Breeding cages are considered overcrowded and animals must be separated if:
  - 1.1. **More than 3 adult mice including pups.** Pups are considered adults and can be weaned at 21-28 days of age, unless the PI's protocol specifically states that weaning age is later than 28 days for justified reasons.
  - 1.2. **Two or more adult mice with more than one litter of pups.** If trio or harem breeding schemes are being used, once the second litter is born one female and all

pups of the same age, with or without the male, must be moved to a separate cage. Females coparent so providing both females have milk, identification of the correct female/litter combination is not essential.

## **Procedures**

1. **Overcrowding.** If animals per cage exceed the cage density allowances (above)
  - a. Facility staff will remove extra animals into a clean cage.
  - b. Staff will label the new cage as per the original cage together with date separated.
  - c. Staff will notify investigators regarding the separation and location of the new cage.
2. **Fighting**
  - a. When fighting injuries are observed, staff will remove the animal responsible for the injuries to a clean cage when it is possible to determine the aggressor. Otherwise the injured animal will be removed for treatment
  - b. The new cage will be labeled as per the old cage with the date of separation
  - c. The investigator will be informed
  - d. The veterinarian will be notified and any treatments prescribed will be administered.
3. **Cage Labeling**
  - a. If the rodent was separated out of a cage due to fighting and is now being housed alone the blue Post-It® Filing Tab will be labeled with an **“F” (Fighting) and the date it was separated.**
  - b. Please see SOP “Cage labeling and record Keeping” for further details.