



## Animal Facility SOP 44.2 Rodent Cage Density Policy

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### I. Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to create a rodent cage density policy.

### II. Scope

This SOP is intended for use by all personnel who use rodents in the BSSC Vivarium including PIs, laboratory faculty and staff, husbandry personnel, veterinary personnel etc.

### III. Definitions

- **Holding Cages** - a cage set up that will not be established for breeding. These cages consist of a number of animals of the same species and sex.
- **Pair breeder** - a breeding cage with one male and one female
- **Trio Breeder** - a breeding cage consisting of one male and two females.
- **Harem Breeder** - a breeding cage consisting of one male and three females.
- **The Guide** - Refers to [the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, Eighth Edition.](#)

### IV. Cage Density Policy

#### 1. Mice

##### a. Holding Cages

- i. Holding cages (weaning cages) may hold no more than 5 adult mice per cage.
- ii. As mice age, they gain weight. Aged mice, depending on strain or age, may require further separation due to their size in order to meet performance standards.

##### b. Breeding Cages

###### i. Pairs

1. A breeding pair may remain paired while there is a litter in the cage.
2. A breeding cage containing a breeding pair is considered overcrowded when a second litter is born, or when the pups reach 21 -28 days old.

###### ii. Trios and Harem

1. When a litter is born to a one of a trio or “harem” breeding cage, the female with the litter should be isolated by removing the other animals and placing them into another cage. This allows the litter to develop under non-overcrowded conditions, while also allowing the others in the group to continue mating.
2. Increased careful observations (daily) of harem breeding cages are necessary to ensure that cages do not become overcrowded.
3. Harem breeding is not recommended. For more information, please see the overcrowding/separation SOP (SOP 33.1).

## 2. Rats

### a. Holding Cages

- i. The number of animals allowed in a rat cage depends greatly on their weight and the size of the cage. Like mice, aged rats, depending on strain or age, may require further separation due to their size in order to meet performance standards. Periodic weighing of aged rats may be necessary to confirm that they meet this standard.
- ii. Current rat cages are 124 sq in. The following restrictions are based on this measurement, and based on the guidelines of the Guide for the Care and Use of Animals.
  1. Rats over 500g must be housed alone.
  2. Rats up to 500g may be housed in pairs.
  3. Rats up to 400g may be housed in groups of three.
  4. Rats up to 300g may be housed in groups of four.
  5. Rats up to 200g may be housed in groups of five.
  6. Rats up to 100g may be housed in groups of seven.

### b. Breeding Cages

- i. For breeding pairs, the male is removed before the litter is born. Only one female rat and her litter may be housed in one cage.