1. PURPOSE
The intent of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe an appropriate environmental enrichment program for guinea pigs.

2. RESPONSIBILITY
Facility Animal Care Committees (FACCs), principal investigators (PIs), animal care staff.

3. PROCEDURES
3.1. The purpose of environmental enrichment is to provide guinea pigs with opportunities to express basic behavior needs, to promote species-typical, non-injurious, behavior and to promote physical and mental health thus enhancing animal welfare. The environmental enrichment should be biologically relevant (i.e.: hiding, socializing, searching) so that it does not lose its enriching value over time.

3.2. Social Contact:
   3.2.1. Pair or group house guinea pigs.
   3.2.2. Guinea pigs may be singly housed in some cases:
       3.2.2.1. Incompatibility.
       3.2.2.2. Medical reasons.
       3.2.2.3. Specific protocol approved by FACC.

3.3. Housing System:
   3.3.1. Animals should be housed with the goal of maximizing species-specific behaviors and minimizing stress-induced behaviors.
   3.3.2. Guinea pigs scare easily; minimize noise and sudden movements adjacent to housing enclosures.
   3.3.3. House guinea pigs in solid-bottom cages with contact bedding, unless specifically described in a protocol and approved by the FACC.
   3.3.4. Housing system should exceed the minimal space recommendations for a standard shoe box cage (~143 sq. inches):
       3.3.4.1. 2 guinea pigs, if <350g each.
       3.3.4.2. 1 guinea pig if >350g (see restrictions to single housing in section 3.2.2).

3.4. Dietary Enrichment:
   3.4.1. Provide (autoclaved) hay preferably daily, or at least twice a week.
   3.4.2. Provide small quantities of fresh vegetables and fruits regularly (2-3 times/week). Vegetables or fruit should be thoroughly rinsed prior to use.

3.5. Objects:
   3.5.1. Shelter:
       3.5.1.1. Provide a shelter.
       3.5.1.2. Shelter should provide enough protected space for all cage occupants.
   3.5.2. Toys:
       3.5.2.1. Provide at least one toy in all cages (e.g. metal or plastic chains or rings mounted on the cage side.)

3.6. Exemption:
   3.6.1. Exemption from this environmental enrichment program must be justified and approved by the FACC, or prescribed for medical reasons.