

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 (FACC), veterinarian, 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 with strong scientific, welfare or medical justification:

3.2.2.1. Incompatibility (aggression)

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, minimizing stress-induced behaviors, providing opportunity for social contact and locomotor and exploratory behaviors. Cages should be of a sufficient size and complexity to allow guinea pigs to be housed in appropriately sized groups and to perform behaviors important to their welfare.

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 the animal use protocol and approved by the FACC.

3.3.4. Housing system should meet or exceed the minimal space and height recommendations of the current Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) Guidelines for a standard guinea pig cage.

3.4. Dietary Enrichment:

3.4.1. Provide (autoclaved) hay ad libitum daily.

3.4.2. Supplement diet with Vitamin C in water, vitamin biscuits, or vegetables containing high amounts of vitamin C.

3.4.3. Provide fresh vegetables daily and fruits 2-3 times/week. Vegetables or fruit should be thoroughly rinsed prior to use.

3.5. Shelter:

3.5.1. Provide a shelter in each cage.

3.6. Toys:

3.6.1. Provide at least one toy in all cages, e.g., metal or plastic chains or rings mounted on the cage side.

3.7. Exemption:

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

SOP REVISION HISTORY

DATE	NEW VERSION
2023.03.06	<p>2. Responsibility Facility Animal Care Committees (FACC), veterinarian, principal investigators (PIs), animal care staff.</p>
	<p>3.2.2. Guinea pigs may be singly housed in some cases with strong scientific, welfare or medical justification:</p>
	<p>3.2.2.1. Incompatibility (aggression)</p> <p>1.1.1. Animals should be housed with the goal of maximizing species-specific behaviors, and minimizing stress-induced behaviors, providing opportunity for social contact and locomotor and exploratory behaviors. Cages should be of a sufficient size and complexity to allow guinea pigs to be housed in appropriately sized groups and to perform behaviors important to their welfare.</p>
	<p>3.3.4. Housing system should meet or exceed the minimal space and height recommendations of the current Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) Guidelines for a standard shoe box guinea pig cage (~143 sq. inches):</p> <p>3.3.4.1. 2 guinea pigs, if <250g each.</p> <p>3.3.4.2. 1 guinea pig if >250g (see restrictions to single housing in section 3.2.2).</p>
	<p>3.4.1. Provide (autoclaved) hay ad libitum preferably daily, or at least twice a week.</p> <p>3.4.2. Supplement diet with Vitamin C in water, vitamin biscuits, or vegetables containing high amounts of vitamin C.</p> <p>3.4.3. Provide small quantities of fresh vegetables daily and fruits regularly (2-3 times/week). Vegetables or fruit should be thoroughly rinsed prior to use.</p>
	<p>3.5. Objects:</p> <p>3.5. Shelter:</p> <p>3.5.1. Provide a shelter in each cage.</p> <p>3.5.2. Shelter should provide enough protected space for all cage occupants.</p>