

Standard Operating Procedure for Identifying Overcrowded Mouse Cages

Due to recent changes in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animal, it is necessary for us to update our policy on breeding cages in the mouse colony. Breeding should occur in the large ventilated cages.

Cages will be observed daily during normal husbandry procedures to identify overcrowding. Overcrowded cages will be marked and the Principal Investigator (and/or their designee) will be notified by Email or phone that corrective action is required.

The PI / laboratory personnel will be notified and an “overcrowded card” placed on the cage if:

- A. There are more than three adults in a cage when a litter is born.
- B. There are **more** than two adults and one litter in the cage when any pups in the cage are older than ten days of age.
- C. There is more than one litter present in the cage.
- D. There are more than 7 adult mice in the cage (adult mice are defined as >21 days of age).

If the Principal Investigator or their staff designee does not correct the condition within 24 hours after notification of the overcrowding (unresolved overcrowding), the ARF staff will separate the animals according to this SOP.

The ARF will charge the Principal Investigator when animals in an overcrowded cage are separated by ARF personnel. If there is no space in which to separate the animals, ARF will make one additional attempt to contact the PI. This notification will consist of an e-mail with an attached read receipt and a telephone call/message to the PI and/or their designee. If the PI or lab staff does not respond within an additional 24 hours, **ARF may euthanize animals** to correct the cage density and notify the PI by way of e-mail of the action taken. Repeated incidents of overcrowding may result in ARF management meeting with the PI and/or their staff to discuss policies on overcrowding and/or the need for a corrective action plan.