

1. PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes the basic procedures for routine care and husbandry of rabbits.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Animal care staff, facility supervisors, Facilities Manager.

3. MATERIALS

- 3.1. Darwin cage cards
- 3.2. Rabbit diet (within 6 months of the milling date)
- 3.3. Clean water bottles
- 3.4. Clean rabbit cages
- 3.5. Paper pan liners
- 3.6. Bedding
- 3.7. Clean litter boxes
- 3.8. Clean environmental enrichment devices
- 3.9. Disinfectant solution

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1. Observation of animals:
 - 4.1.1. Observe all rabbits daily for illness, injury and general condition, and to ensure they have sufficient food and water, including weekends and holidays.
- 4.2. Emergency and holiday care:
 - 4.2.1. Provide routine care and husbandry for all rabbits on weekends and holidays.
 - 4.2.2. Make provisions for emergency care by providing both work and after hours contact information for Principal Investigators (PI's) and their staff. Provide special requests or instructions if needed.
- 4.3. Animal identification methods:
 - 4.3.1. Identify all pens or cages with a cage card.
 - 4.3.2. Include, at a minimum, the following information:
 - 4.3.2.1. Investigator
 - 4.3.2.2. Protocol number
 - 4.3.2.3. Species
 - 4.3.2.4. Strain
 - 4.3.2.5. Sex
 - 4.3.2.6. Number of animals in the pen
 - 4.3.3. Identify individual animals as needed in accordance with SOP. Examples of individual identification methods include: micro-chips, tattoos or ear tags.
- 4.4. Food and water:
 - 4.4.1. Feed animals to meet current National Research Council (USA) recommendations for rabbit nutrition.
 - 4.4.2. Food storage:

- 4.4.2.1. Store feed on plastic pallets off the floor and 4-6 inches away from walls, in a vermin-proof storeroom.
- 4.4.2.2. Store open feed bags in leak-proof containers with tightly fitting lids.
- 4.4.2.3. Maintain temperature and humidity controls in the storeroom. Avoid temperatures above 21°C and extremes in humidity Use feed within 6 months of milling date.
- 4.4.2.4. Stack feed in a manner that allows easy reading of the milling date.
- 4.4.3. Check automatic watering devices daily, and flush system weekly, for proper operation and cleanliness.
- 4.4.4. Change the automatic water system's Pressure Reducing Station filter once per month.
- 4.4.5. Empty water bottles, rinse and fill with fresh water daily.
- 4.4.6. Monitor water quality routinely to ensure that it is free of contaminants that could potentially expose animals to chemical or infectious agents. Refer to SOP for water quality monitoring requirements.
- 4.5. Social and environmental enrichment:
 - 4.5.1. Group-house rabbits whenever possible.
 - 4.5.2. Provide environmental enrichment devices for all rabbits.
 - 4.5.3. Single-housed animals will benefit from time in exercise pens.
 - 4.5.4. Examples of enrichment include, but are not limited to, the following: shelters, nesting boxes, plastic balls and dumbbells. Please refer to Environmental Enrichment Program for Rabbits SOP.
- 4.6. Euthanasia and disposal of dead animals:
 - 4.6.1. Euthanize rabbits by overdose of anesthetics. Refer to SOP.
 - 4.6.2. Ensure that euthanasia is conducted by trained and experienced staff.
 - 4.6.3. Dispose of dead animals by incineration.
- 4.7. Vermin control:
 - 4.7.1. Refer to SOP for a description of the vermin control program.
- 4.8. Environment and environmental control:
 - 4.8.1. Maintain room temperatures between 16 and 21° C.
 - 4.8.2. Maintain relative humidity between 40% and 70%.
 - 4.8.3. Maintain a daily log of room temperature and humidity.
- 4.9. Bedding:
 - 4.9.1. Use pine shavings as bedding material for pen-housed rabbits.
 - 4.9.2. Use enough bedding to keep the rabbits clean and dry until the next scheduled change.
 - 4.9.3. Store the bedding off the floor on pallets and in such a manner to prevent contamination.
- 4.10. Lighting:
 - 4.10.1. Provide a regular diurnal lighting cycle.
Note: Lights are controlled by timers set at a photoperiod of 12 to 14 hours of light. Check the timer performance routinely.
- 4.11. Space requirements:
 - 4.11.1. Provide pens or cages that are appropriate in size for the number and size of the rabbits housed in them. Refer to CCAC recommendations.
- 4.12. Cleaning of cages or cage banks:
 - 4.12.1. Change the pan liners three times per week, at a minimum.
 - 4.12.2. Change the cage banks every two weeks, at a minimum. . Only transfer one animal at a time.
 - 4.12.3. Change water bottles weekly.
 - 4.12.4. Environmental enrichment devices are cleaned and replaced at the time the cages are changed.

- 4.13. Cleaning of pens:
 - 4.13.1. Three times a week, remove wet bedding and empty litter pans. Replenish with fresh bedding.
 - 4.13.2. Remove bedding and disinfect pens, surrounding walls, food hoppers/bowls and litter pans once every two weeks.
 - 4.13.3. Environmental enrichment devices are cleaned and replaced at the time the pens are cleaned.
- 4.14. Cleaning and sanitation of housing room and equipment:
 - 4.14.1. Weekly:
 - 4.14.1.1. Flush the floor drains.
 - 4.14.1.2. Check light timers.
 - 4.14.1.3. Mop floors.
 - 4.14.2. Monthly:
 - 4.14.2.1. Wipe down all surfaces such as sinks, doors, door jams and doorknobs, windows, cart tops, shelves, etc. with the disinfectant solution.
 - 4.14.2.2. Clean room exhaust grills.
 - 4.14.3. Bi-annually:
 - 4.14.3.1. Wash all walls with disinfectant solution.
- 4.15. Transportation:
 - 4.15.1. Transport rabbits as per SOP.
- 4.16. Preparation disinfecting solution:
 - 4.16.1. Wear personal protective equipment when preparing and using disinfectant solution.
 - 4.16.2. Dilute according to manufacturer's recommendation.
 - 4.16.3. Clean surfaces prior to disinfection to remove any organic material.
 - 4.16.4. Apply disinfectant and allow for adequate contact time.
- 4.17. Waste Management:
 - 4.17.1. Deposit non-regulated or non-infectious Medical Waste and soiled materials in dumpsters.
 - 4.17.2. Regulated or infectious Medical Waste is processed by McGill University's Waste Management program.

5. SAFETY

- 5.1. Working with rabbits can trigger related allergies. Check with the facility supervisor regarding requirements for personal protective equipment and refer to SOP.
- 5.2. Observe SOP for animal related injury.