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**1. PURPOSE**

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This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes routine husbandry procedures for cats.

**2. RESPONSIBILITY**

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Animal care staff, veterinary care staff, facility supervisors, Facilities Manager.

**3. MATERIALS**

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- 3.1. Darwin cage cards
- 3.2. Feed
- 3.3. Bowls for food and water
- 3.4. Litter pans and litter
- 3.5. Cages
- 3.6. Clean environmental enrichment devices
- 3.7. Disinfectant

**4. PROCEDURES**

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- 4.1. Observation of animals:
  - 4.1.1. Observe all animals daily for illness, injury and general condition, including weekends and holidays.
- 4.2. Emergency and holiday care:
  - 4.2.1. Provide routine care and husbandry for all animals 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. Records and documentation:
  - 4.3.1. Identify each cat with a tattoo or collar.
  - 4.3.2. Record keeping:
    - 4.3.2.1. Keep a day-to-day log of events, including medical procedures, for the life of the cat.
    - 4.3.2.2. Maintain records on procurement, transport and disposal of all cats and an inventory of cats in the facility.
- 4.4. Food and water:
  - 4.4.1. Feed animals to meet current National Research Council (USA) recommendations for feline nutrition
  - 4.4.2. Food storage:
    - 4.4.2.1. Store feed off the floor and 4–6 inches away from walls, in a vermin-proof storeroom.
    - 4.4.2.2. Store open feedbags in leak-proof containers with tightly fitting lids.
    - 4.4.2.3. Maintain temperature and humidity control in the storeroom. Avoid temperatures above 21°C and extremes in humidity.
    - 4.4.2.4. Use feed before the expiration date.
    - 4.4.2.5. Stack feed in a manner that allows easy reading of the expiration date.
  - 4.4.3. Feed adult cats at least once a day, unless otherwise recommended by the veterinarian. Offer *ad lib* (free choice) feeding unless required by the protocol or by the veterinarian.

- 4.4.4. Offer fresh, clean, potable, uncontaminated water *ad lib*.
- 4.4.5. 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 cats and allow them to roam free within the room whenever possible.
  - 4.5.2. Provide enrichment devices in the room or cage (e.g., ladders, perches, toys, cardboard boxes, and blankets).
  - 4.5.3. Provide additional enrichment (e.g. additional exercise time, increased human contact, additional enrichment devices in the cage) if cats are housed individually.
  - 4.5.4. Refer to Environmental Enrichment Program for Cats SOP.
- 4.6. Quarantine procedures:
  - 4.6.1. Cats from SPF suppliers are not required to be quarantined.
  - 4.6.2. Quarantine cats from non-SPF vendors for a minimum of 14 days. Refer to SOP.
- 4.7. Euthanasia and disposal of dead animals;
  - 4.7.1. Euthanize cats as per Large Animal Euthanasia SOP.
  - 4.7.2. Euthanasia must be conducted by trained and experienced staff.
  - 4.7.3. Dispose of dead animals by incineration.
- 4.8. Pest control:
  - 4.8.1. Refer to SOP for a description of the vermin control program.
- 4.9. Environment and environmental control:
  - 4.9.1. Maintain room temperatures between 18°C to 22°C.
  - 4.9.2. Maintain relative humidity between 40% and 70%.
  - 4.9.3. Provide 10 to 15 complete air changes per hour of 100% outside air.
  - 4.9.4. Maintain a daily log of room temperature and humidity.
- 4.10. Lighting:
  - 4.10.1. Provide a regular diurnal lighting cycle.  
**Note:** Lights are controlled by timers with a photoperiod of 12 to 14 hours of light. Check the timer performance regularly.
- 4.11. Space requirements
  - 4.11.1. Group house cats in a room with a minimum of four square feet of floor space per cat.
  - 4.11.2. When housed in cages, use an appropriate sized cage for the size and number of cats, meeting or exceeding Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) recommendations.
- 4.12. Cleaning and sanitation of cages, housing room and equipment:
  - 4.12.1. Scoop litter and remove soiled litter daily. Perform a total litter change at least once per week. Observe for abnormal feces and alert veterinary care staff if necessary.
  - 4.12.2. Sanitize water bowls, feeders/food bowls and litter pans at least once per week.
  - 4.12.3. Replace enrichment devices that are not sanitizable every two weeks or more frequently as needed.
  - 4.12.4. Clean and sanitize cages thoroughly at least every two weeks, more frequently if needed.  
**IMPORTANT:** Whenever quaternary ammonias are used for cleaning, thoroughly rinse and dry all surfaces before cats are allowed to come in contact with them. Cats are very susceptible to chemical burns from this compound.
  - 4.12.5. Sweep floor daily and disinfect once weekly.

- 4.12.6. Wipe down all surfaces such as sinks, doors, door jams and doorknobs, windows, cart tops, shelves, etc. with the disinfectant solution once per month.
- 4.12.7. Clean walls twice per year with disinfectant solution.
- 4.13. Transportation
  - 4.13.1. Refer to Animal Transportation SOP.
- 4.14. Preparation disinfecting solution:
  - 4.14.1. Wear personal protective equipment when preparing and using disinfectant solution.
  - 4.14.2. Dilute according to manufacturer's recommendation.
  - 4.14.3. Clean surfaces prior to disinfection to remove any organic material.
  - 4.14.4. Apply disinfectant and allow for adequate contact time.
- 4.15. Waste Management:
  - 4.15.1. Deposit non-regulated or non-infectious Medical Waste and soiled materials in dumpsters.
  - 4.15.2. Regulated or infectious Medical Waste is processed by McGill University's Waste Management program.

## 5. SAFETY

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- 5.1. Handle cats carefully as they may bite or scratch. Any incident of this nature must be reported. Observe SOP for animal related injury.
- 5.2. If you are a pregnant woman, seek medical counseling before working with cats.
- 5.3. Working with cats can trigger related allergies. Check with the facility supervisor regarding requirements for personal protective equipment and refer to SOP.