
1. PURPOSE

The intent of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to describe limitations for housing rodents in wire-bottom cages.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Facility Animal Care Committees (FACCs), principal investigators (PIs) and their staff, facility supervisor/manager.

3. PROCEDURES

- 3.1. The default housing system for maintaining rodents at McGill University and its affiliated institution is solid-bottom caging with bedding.
- 3.2. The use of wire-bottom cages can exceptionally be approved by the FACC when there is an appropriate scientific rationale for not using solid-bottom caging with bedding. Appropriate scientific rationale for using wire-bottom cages include:
 - 3.2.1. Prevention/ limitation of coprophagia.
 - 3.2.2. Eliminate ingestion of bedding or bedding contaminants.
 - 3.2.3. Contact studies in which there may be a risk of the animals having additional contact with the compound.
 - 3.2.4. Medical conditions that may be exacerbated by use of bedding (ex.: diabetic or burn models).
 - 3.2.5. Metabolic studies in which feces and urine are collected and/or water and food consumption must be accurately measured with collection of spills.
 - 3.2.6. Assessment of copulation in rats by detection of the copulatory plug.
 - 3.2.7. Studies involving short term (less than 8 hours), individual, restricted feeding.
- 3.3. For all rodents housed on wired-bottom cages:
 - 3.3.1. The investigator must provide a detailed justification for the use of this type of housing in the Animal Use Protocol (AUP).
 - 3.3.2. The rodents must be provided with environmental enrichment. Exemptions to providing environmental enrichment must be justified and approved by the FACC.
 - 3.3.3. A health monitoring program must be in place to regularly evaluate the well-being and the health (particularly of the feet/legs) of rodents. Details on the program must be described in the AUP and approved by the FACC. In addition:
 - 3.3.3.1. All animals must be evaluated by direct and frequent visual examination during the regular cage changes by the animal care and/or research staff.
 - 3.3.3.2. Any lesions or discomfort must be reported immediately to the veterinary staff.
 - 3.3.3.3. Rodents with evidence of foot/leg lesions must not be solely housed on wire-bottom caging;
- 3.4. All rodents not directly involved in a study, breeding or recovering from anesthesia must be housed in solid-bottom cages.
- 3.5. All future rodent caging purchases must be for solid bottom cages unless the caging is needed to replace old wire-bottom caging or expand existing inventories that are needed for a specific, approved, study where the use of wire-bottom caging has been scientifically justified.
- 3.6. Request for exceptions to this policy must be reviewed and approved by the FACC.