

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**  
**DIVISION OF COMPARATIVE MEDICINE**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA**

SOP#: 403.3

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Page 1 of 2

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**TITLE:** **Rodent Enrichment**  
**SCOPE:** Personnel with Regular Rodent Contact  
**RESPONSIBILITY:** Facility Manager, Technical Staff, Veterinary Staff  
**PURPOSE:** To Outline Circumstances and Procedures of Enrichment of Rodents

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**I. PURPOSE**

1. To ensure the highest quality of health among animals used for research and teaching purposes, and to ensure the consistency and integrity of research data. The purpose of this SOP is to describe the procedures for enriching the primary enclosure of rodents.

**II. RESPONSIBILITY**

1. The Veterinarians oversee all aspects of animal health, and are assisted by all program staff.
2. The Facility Managers **ensures clear and accurate communication** with the Principal Investigator and research staff, and uniform implementation of all procedures.
3. The animal care staff is responsible for the careful implementation of this procedure, for daily observations of animals under their care, and for prompt reporting of observations regarding the performance of this procedure.

**III. GENERAL PROCEDURES**

1. When in agreement with the objectives of the protocol, the structural and social environments of rodents will be enhanced to encourage species-typical behavior, improve animal well-being, and prevent maladaptive behaviors.
2. **New research faculty and staff are advised during animal facility orientations that all rodent housing receives environmental enrichment, unless an exemption has been approved in writing by the IACUC.**
3. **Aspects of protocols that may require an exemption** from this procedure at the discretion of the Principal Investigator and approved by the IACUC include, but are not limited to, studies involving nutrition, exercise, behavior, protruding catheters or cannulae or those involving certain strains.

4. **To ensure that enrichment devices or materials do not** introduce a variable that may confound interpretation of protocol data, the use of **enrichment devices or materials will be uniform**, including use of a **uniform color** of device, and comprehensive in manner, and will **involve all animals of a study and/or colony**, unless instructed otherwise by the IACUC approved protocol and/or Principal Investigator and as documented on the contact sheet of the rodent housing room log book.
5. **Enrichment devices that are used** in the primary enclosures of **mice** include the Mouse Igloo from Bio-Serv, the Mouse Hut from Bio-Serv, and the Mouse House from Techniplast.
6. **Enrichment devices that may be used** in the primary enclosures of **rats** include the Rodent Retreats from Bio-Serv, Rat Tunnels from Bio-Serv, and the Rodent Crawl Balls from Bio-Serv
7. **Enrichment devices that may be used** in primary enclosures of **gerbils** include the Rodent Retreats from Bio-Serv, Rat/Mouse Tunnels from Bio-Serv and Rodent wood gnawing blocks from Bio-Serv. In addition, sand baths may be provided for gerbil enrichment.
8. **Enrichment materials** (e.g., nesting material) used uniformly in a majority of primary enclosures for a given protocol may vary among rodents held on behalf of that protocol as instructed by the Principal Investigator (e.g. mice undergoing imaging may not be given nesting material but are provided igloos or huts for enrichment), and as documented on the contact sheet of the rodent housing room log book.
9. Enrichment devices will be changed and **sanitized at least once every two weeks when cage change-outs occur**.
10. If a device's physical integrity is questioned, the use of that device will be discontinued immediately. **All devices are evaluated during change outs** to ensure that are free of sharp edges, defects, cracks, or other evidence of diminished integrity, and disposed of and replaced with a similar device if such evidence is found.

Approved:

Date: