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741R0020

Exemption for nonhuman primate cage height, juvenile cages.

The AWA states in 9 CFR, section 3.80 (c) that “innovative primary enclosures not precisely meeting the floor area and height requirements provided in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section, but that do provide nonhuman primates with a sufficient volume of space and the opportunity to express species typical behavior, may be used at research facilities when approved by the Committee ...”.

The University of Houston IACUC approved a cage height exemption for the cages currently used to house *infant and young juvenile rhesus macaques (Macaca mulatta)* that weigh from 750 grams - 2 kg.

- The floor area of these cages is 3 square feet as per the AWA but only 27” in height.
- The height of the cage is more than double the height of the monkey housed in it and provides a perch and ample room to climb and explore.
- All animals have access to bedding in which to forage.
- The cage style has open bars on all four sides and on top so the animals can see, touch and groom the animals on either side.
- The design of the cages allows more visibility of all activities that occur in the room and promotes visual, auditory and tactile interactions amongst the animals.
- The cages are designed to let light penetrate evenly into the cages, the scientific justification for these cages. Most nonhuman primate cages have solid sides that interfere with light penetration. *The animals housed in these style cages are part of a high light study of early visual development. The scientific justification is that the cages need to let the high intensity light penetrate as evenly as possible into the cages to assess any changes that may occur in visual development. The results of this study are applicable to the early visual development in humans.*
- The solid panels found in most NHP cages prevent social interactions that involve physical contact between neighboring animals. Aggression is not a problem with juveniles this age and they seek physical contact, but the separation by the bars keeps them from being able to cling to each other (considered an undesirable behavior).
- All animals are given 1-2 hours of play time in a *large* play cage (31” W X 51” D X 60” H) with other animals in the group at least five times a week.
- *A total of 18 infant/juvenile rhesus macaques were housed in these style cages during the period from Oct 1, 2011 to Sept 30, 2012.*