

RE: Exception to standards for the fiscal year 2014 USDA Annual Report from the University of New Mexico Main Campus Registration No. 85-R-0002, Customer No. 1071

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee have approved an exception to the standards and regulations of the Animal Welfare Act.

Summary:

A hamster breeding colony with a proven breeding record going back more than 20 years has been approved to group house 1 male and 2 females per cage during the breeding cycle. The cage floor space provided is 221 square inches, and includes the following enrichment: weekly supplements of fresh fruits and vegetables (e.g. apples, pears, lettuce, spinach, etc.) and ample nesting material along with standard rodent bedding. The success of the colony has prompted this exception and it affects an average of 58 hamsters in the colony.

Investigator Explanation:

Several mating pairs have been established and maintained for years and the Attending Veterinarian and Facility Supervisor have determined that the current housing arrangements meet the intent of the Act, which is to optimize enrichment while limiting aggression between breeders and minimizing cannibalism of neonates. Although there are references that cannibalism may increase when nursing hamsters are housed with other adult hamsters, based upon the procedures in the Biology ARF, with stable life-long mating groups, "life-mates", we have not seen any incident of cannibalism under this paradigm. If cannibalism should occur in a group then that group will be separated.

Reviewed and approved on Sept 18, 2014

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