UNM HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

OFFICE OF RESEARCH

Animal Resource Facility
Biohazard Compliance
Biomedical Research Education Program
Clinical and Translational Sciences Center
Conflict of Interest
Human Research Protection
Office of Animal Care Compliance
Radiation Safety

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee have approved an exception to the standards and regulations of the Animal Welfare Regulations, reference: 3.28 (b) (3) (ii).

Summary:

A hamster breeding colony with a proven breeding record going back more than 20 years has been approved to continually maintain pair or trio breeders (1 M: 1-2F) from the time of weaning until retired from breeding. The cage floor space provided is 221 square inches, and includes ample nesting material along with standard rodent bedding. The success of the colony has prompted this exception and it affects an average of 4 hamster breeder cages and associated litters.

Investigator Explanation:

The method of establishing mating pairs or trios at the time of weaning has been utilized for years and determined by the Attending Veterinarian and Facility Supervisor to result in much less adult and neonatal injury or death than intermittently pairing of adult breeders. Although the USDA animal welfare regulations (ref: 3.28 (b)(3)(ii)) states that a female hamster with litter should be housed with no other hamsters, our current housing method meets the intent of the regulation, which is to optimize enrichment while limiting aggression between breeders and minimizing cannibalism of neonates. Although there are references in the literature that cannibalism may increase when nursing hamsters are housed with other adult hamsters, based upon the procedures and experience in the Castetter Hall ARF, with stable life-long mating groups, "life-mates", we rarely have seen incident of cannibalism under this paradigm and early pairing enhances establishment of breeders that are compatible. If significant fighting between adults or cannibalism of young should occur, then the respective group will be separated and not used as breeders, unless there are other extenuating circumstances that may have contributed to such adverse outcomes.

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