

## USDA Annual Report of Research Facility IACUC-Approved Exception to USDA Regulations

Georgia Institute of Technology

Registration Number: 57-R-0010

Reporting Period: October 1, 2021 - September 30, 2022

Exceptions approved by the IACUC under 9 C.F.R. § 2.38(k) that are not provided for under the AWA regulations and standards:

- ***Animal Welfare Act and Regulations, [pp 119](#): Resting surfaces.***

Each primary enclosure housing cats must contain a resting surface or surfaces that, in the aggregate, are large enough to hold all the occupants of the primary enclosure at the same time comfortably. The resting surfaces must be elevated, impervious to moisture, and be able to be easily cleaned and sanitized, or easily replaced when soiled or worn. Low resting surfaces that do not allow the space under them to be comfortably occupied by the animal will be counted as part of the floor space.

As part of an ongoing collaborative project, Georgia Tech receives cats with spinal cord injuries from a collaborating institution. These cats have sensory deficit with limited use of their hind legs. For the safety of these animals, the hard elevated resting surface has been removed from the primary enclosure. The Research team, PRL Veterinarians, and IACUC determined that removal of the elevated resting surface is required to eliminate the risk of jumping and/or falling post injury and reduce the possibility of developing pressure sores. Rather than an elevated surface, the cats are provided thick foam padded beds at the ground level of their primary enclosure to provide comfort and remove the risk of jumping. The thick foam bedding is designed to reduce the risk of pressure sores often associated with hard surfaces. Cats may be housed without elevated resting surfaces for up to four days prior to a terminal experiment. The Attending Veterinarian continues to advise the IACUC on the status of the cats recovering from spinal cord injuries, and the IACUC has observed no negative impact on the animals housed without elevated resting surfaces.

The Georgia Tech IACUC approved the removal of the elevated resting surfaces for cats recovering from spinal cord injuries. However, the removal of elevated resting boards is a departure from a must statement in the AWAR and is a reportable Exception from the AWAR.

The IACUC will continue to monitor this IACUC-Approved AWAR Exception and submit as part of the USDA Annual Report.

Number of animals affected: 10