



7 November 2019

Re: Summary of exceptions attachment

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at Edwards Lifesciences has approved the following exception to the Animal Welfare Act regulations.

- Alternative cage dimensions for rabbits.

The Edwards Research Center (ERC) houses rabbits in pairs whenever possible, in accordance with the USDA, the Guide, and AAALAC's recommendations to socially house rabbits.

Per the AWA, rabbits weighing 2-4 kg should have floor space of 3.0 ft² and therefore two rabbits in this weight range should have 6.0 ft². Our rabbit cage sizes have 5.2 ft² or 5.5 ft² floor space (depending on manufacturer). 16% of our cages have a shelf with usable space above and below (12 shelves 26.5 X 12 (2.2 ft²) for the 5.2 ft² cages and 3 shelves 26.5 X 8.5 (1.6 ft²) for the 5.5 ft² cages).

In an effort to prioritize pair housing, the IACUC has approved the housing of two rabbits up to 4 kg in these cages.

The 0.5-0.8 ft² reduction in floor space per pair is outweighed by the benefits of social housing. Despite the reduced floor space, the rabbits maintain good health and engage in species specific behaviors. Importantly, they have positive social interactions with their cage mates, which provide sensory and cognitive stimulation, in turn promoting their psychological welfare.

This exception applies to all rabbits housed at the ERC.