

## Mice – Basic Care

- Mice are valuable as research animals because of their small size, short generation time, ease of breeding, and are genetically the best characterized of all mammals.
- In general, the mouse is not really aggressive and will attempt to evade rather than confront.
- The handler is most at risk when trying to grasp and restrain the mouse.
- Mice are social animals and are best kept in compatible groups, that should be established while they are young. They will fight and may cause serious injuries, otherwise. This is particularly true with males and some strains, such as the balb/c.
- Fighting may be related to establishing a hierarchy, although more commonly barbering will be seen.
- Barbering is a focal loss of hair or whiskers with no wounds and a very sharp margin between the areas of hair loss and the normal hair. Usually inflicted upon subordinates by a dominant mouse.
- Mice are nocturnal, but substantial activity also occurs during the daytime as well.
- Enrichment should be provided unless specified in the protocol and approved by the IACUC.
- Examples of enrichment:
  - Mouse igloos
  - Paper cups
  - Mouse tunnels
  - Group housing
  - Nestlets
  - Nylabones
  - Crawl balls
- Commonly demonstrate burrowing and nesting behavior therefore nesting material and plenty of bedding should be supplied.
- Minimum cage sizes are specified in the Animal Welfare Regulations and The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals exceptions must be approved by the IACUC.
- Should be fed a high quality commercially prepared diet that is balanced for proper nutrition.
- Food and water should be fed ad libitum.
- Should be housed on contact bedding in solid bottom caging.
- Most commonly used method to pick up mice is to grasp near the base of the tail, between the thumb and forefinger or use smooth tip forceps for grasping at the base of the tail.
- To restrain, grasp at the base of the tail and place on cage lid. Gently pull back on the tail. Quickly and firmly reach down and grasp the mouse by the scruff near the base of the head. With the tail in one hand and scruff in the other, lift the mouse and tuck the tail between the palm and third finger of the hand holding the scruff.
- Pups less than 1- days old should be picked up by cupping your hands around the body with a small amount of nesting material.
- For more specific species information including physiologic data, husbandry and breeding requirements, or procedural information, please contact the Office of Laboratory Animal Care (865-974-5634).