

## Rat Housing and Cage Density Policy

**Background:** The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care and the Public Health Service require that institutions base their animal care and use programs on the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. The Yale University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must comply with the national standards and recommendations contained within the *Guide* when establishing cage populations. Yale Animal Resources Center (YARC) is required to uphold the following density requirements: The Yale Animal Resources Center (YARC) will apply the following standards for housing rats at Yale University.

### Policy:

#### **Holding Cages:**

A standard "shoebox" cage (10.5 X 19 X 8"), 143 sq. in., holds a maximum number of rats by body weight with the following cage capacity:

Body weight (grams)	No. rats per cage
<100	6
up to 200	4
up to 300	3
up to 400	2
>400	1

YARC staff will continue to house new shipments at a maximum number of rats per cage based on body weight. When YARC staff observes a cage containing more than the maximum number they will separate animals to comply with cage density requirements. The original cage will be labeled with the date, number moved, and an identifying code. New cages will be labeled with the name of the Principal Investigator, protocol number, the date, the corresponding identifying code, and the number of rats.

#### **Breeding Cages:** (Cages that contain male and female rats or pregnant rats).

The standard "shoebox" rat cage can hold one breeding pair with a litter. The male may remain with the female while pups are born and through weaning. A cage is considered overcrowded if a new litter is born before the older litter is weaned. Pregnant rats must be separated from harem breeding (one male with two or more females) cages before parturition. *Progeny must always be separated from the mother before she gives birth to a new litter.*

The following examples are conditions where YARC staffs will automatically separate rats in breeding cages:

1. A newborn litter born in a harem breeding cage.
2. A newborn litter born in a cage that already has an older litter.
3. Any cage that is beyond the cage capacity noted in the above table.
4. A litter that reaches 21 days of age
5. If there is an exceptionally large litter of rats (>12, sometimes up to 20), then the laboratory will be required to separate the male rat or switch the animals to a larger cage.

*The Principal Investigator will be charged the standard technical rate for separating rats that exceed the cage density standards noted above.*

**\*Any exceptions to the above policy must have prior IACUC approval.**

**REVIEWED & APPROVED BY THE IACUC: 6/21/2006**