Policy #9901

How Many Mice or Rats May be Housed in Cages

Based upon guidelines given in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, cages used in animal housing areas at Albert Einstein College of Medicine (EINSTEIN) may hold the following combinations of animals:

**MICE**

Mouse cages have 70 in2 of floor space and may hold either of the following combinations:

- A. Five (5) or fewer adult mice of **less than 25 grams** per mouse
- B. Four (4) or fewer adult mice weighing between 25-35 grams per mouse
- C. Three (3) or fewer adult mice weighing between 35-45 grams.
- D. Two (2) adult mice over 45 grams.
- E. Two adult mice plus one litter of pups

**IF HAREM BREEDING IS UTILIZED, PREGNANT FEMALES MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE CAGE** so that the cage never contains more than one litter of pups concurrently. The pregnant female may be moved with the breeder male, if post-partum estrus breeding is planned. If TWO females are allowed to whelp simultaneously in the same cage, one dam & her litter must be removed (cage separated) immediately. If it is difficult to determine which litter belongs to each dam, the two dams may be separated and the litters may be randomly split between the two dams in separate cages.

N.B - If the male is separated from the pregnant female prior to parturition, the investigator will lose the possibility of breeding at the immediate post-partum estrus and it is likely that the total yield of pups will be diminished (over time).

Exceptions to this rule may be permitted only by specific approval by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Exceptions may be granted when mice have consistently poor conception rates or have consistently small litters (less than 4 pups). Exceptions may
also be granted when one normal female is allowed to whelp in a cage with a mutant female who is unable to care for her litter (e.g. the mutant female lacks mammary glands). In this case the litter of the normal female is removed and she will act as a foster mother to mutant pups.

RATS

Rat cages (190 in²) can hold 4 adults up to 400 grams or one adult pair plus a litter. These cages should not be used for harem breeding unless dams are separated once they are determined to be pregnant.

Breeding cage (252 in²) should ideally be used for breeding rats (2 adults and a litter). A cage can accommodate only one litter at a time. More than one female and her litter in a cage is not permitted. If harem-style breeding is employed, pregnant females must be removed when they are noticed to be pregnant.

Litters must be weaned promptly at 21 days, unless pups are immature.

Square cages (72 in²) are to be used for single housing rats (only).