

## Rat Housing Guidance

1. No more than three adult rats should be housed together. If the rats reach a body weight of over 500g they must be separated to a density of two per cage. NOTE: If the study requires that social housing groups remain constant from start to finish during a project in which the animals will grow to 500g or larger, then research staff should request that rats be housed two per cage at the beginning of the study.
2. For breeding only two adult rats (a monogamous pair) should be kept together continuously in a long-term breeding cage. If the breeding strategy involves rotating animals through a mating cage for 96 hours or less and then removing the mated females, temporary housing of a male and two females is acceptable if the females are less than 500 grams.
3. No more than one litter should be present in a standard rat cage, in the company of no more than two adults, one of which is the nursing dam. All litters should be weaned by 21 days of age, separated by sex, and housed no more than three per cage. The research group is responsible for observing litters and breeder animals frequently to identify and remedy problems in a timely fashion.
4. CRF staff will observe colony conditions and communicate with the research group when overcrowding is present. The CRF has the responsibility and the authority to clean, separate, wean, or sacrifice animals if unacceptable conditions persist after the research group is notified, and may bill for these services. Overcrowding notices will be placed on the cages if conditions exceed the guidelines outlined in this guidance document. A CRF staff member will contact the research group if this occurs. If animals are not separated within 48 hours, in most cases CRF personnel will separate and charge the lab accordingly.
5. These guidelines are based on regulatory requirements and performance standards applicable to the caging routinely provided by the CRF. If alternative housing arrangements or special caging equipment is required for research purposes, investigators can contact the CRF to discuss possible exceptions to these guidelines. Such special circumstances generally require IACUC approval. NOTE: Standard per diem rates cover the expenses of routinely changing cages once per week. Special arrangements that result in an increased changing frequency or are more labor-intensive than standard caging may result in increased per diem rates or extra service charges.