ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT FOR ANIMALS USED IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING

1. Background

The provision of environmental enrichment to all animals used in research and teaching at ISU maintains the University’s compliance with the Guide\(^1\) and Ag Guide\(^2\) and is required for the University to retain a Public Health Service (PHS) Assurance\(^3\).

Environmental enrichment includes additions to an animal’s environment that enhance its well-being by allowing it to express species-typical behaviors. Environmental enrichment should provide appropriate housing, care, activities, and social interaction to promote the well-being of research animals while not compromising personnel safety, animal health and safety, or the goals of the research. Because animals may become accustomed and indifferent to the enrichments provided, enrichment devices should be rotated to encourage curiosity and discourage negative behaviors.

The following criteria should be considered when evaluating items to be used for environmental enrichment:

1. Species of animal and its needs, abilities, and habits
2. Type of enrichment device—treat, toy, or exercise
3. Ability of device to stimulate the animal
4. Safety of the device—does not injure the animal
5. Ability to clean and sanitize the device
6. Nature of the research being done—the enrichment device does not hinder or alter research findings

2. Policy

Animals in Laboratory Animal Resources (LAR) facilities will be provided species-appropriate environmental enrichment as part of the standard husbandry procedures provided by LAR.

Those animals not housed in LAR facilities will need to have environmental enrichment provided by the PI or other animal care staff. Principal investigators housing laboratory animals in non-LAR facilities should consult with the Attending Veterinarian and/or the LAR veterinary staff to determine the most appropriate form of enrichment for the species they are working with.

A resource for common enrichments for various species can be found at https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/environmental-enrichment.
For any studies that would be negatively impacted by standard environmental enrichment, the PI must request an exception from this policy in their IACUC protocol, which will be reviewed by the IACUC. This type of exception must be scientifically justified. An exception must be approved by the IACUC prior to withholding enrichment from animals on the protocol.

3. References and Regulations

4. A resource for common enrichments for various species can be found at https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/environmental-enrichment

Direct questions about this document to: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Iowa State University, 515-294-9581, iacuc@iastate.edu.

Direct questions about species-appropriate enrichment to the Attending Veterinarian, Dr. Mary Sauer, msauer@iastate.edu or 515-294-0266; or to Laboratory Animal Resources veterinary staff at 515-294-8507.