1. PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) describes the guinea pigs’ appropriate environmental enrichment program.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

Principal investigator (PI), their research staff.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1. Environmental enrichment aims to allow guinea pigs to express species-specific behavior, prevent injurious and stereotypical behavior, and promote physical and mental health, thus enhancing animal welfare.

3.2. Environmental enrichment should be biologically relevant (i.e., hiding, socializing, foraging) so that it does not lose its enriching value over time.

3.3. Social Contact:
   3.3.1. Pair or group house guinea pigs.
   3.3.2. Guinea pigs may be singly housed in some cases:
      3.3.2.1. Incompatibility.
      3.3.2.2. Medical reasons.
      3.3.2.3. Last, in the experiment.
      3.3.2.4. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approved the specific protocol.

3.4. Housing System:
   3.4.1. The housing allows maximal species-specific behaviors and minimal stress-induced behaviors.
   3.4.2. Guinea pigs scare easily; minimize noise and sudden movements adjacent to housing enclosures.
      3.4.2.1. Minimal cage height – 17.8cm, Minimal floor space 652 sq. cm per adult Guinea pig, solid bottom cage or hiding place.

3.5. Dietary Enrichment:
   3.5.1. Provide seed bar, other seed mixture, or alfalfa cubes, preferably daily or at least twice a week.
   3.5.2. Provide small quantities of fresh vegetables and fruits regularly (2-3 times/week). Vegetables or fruit should be thoroughly rinsed before use.

3.6. Objects:
   3.6.1. Shelter:
3.6.1.1. Provide shelter, tube, or box.
3.6.1.2. The shelter should provide enough protected space for all cage occupants.

3.6.2 Toys:
3.6.2.1 Provide at least one toy in all cages (e.g., metal or plastic chains or rings mounted on the cage side.)

3.7. Marking:
3.7.1. Cages with single animals must be marked with specific cage cards indicating the reason for solitary housing and the date of housing.

3.8. Exemption:
3.8.1. Exemption from this environmental enrichment program must be justified and approved by the IACUC or prescribed for medical reasons by the veterinarian staff.

SOP 808 ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM FOR GUINEA PIGS
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