

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH
BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH MODEL SERVICES**

POLICY

NUMBER: 107

EFFECTIVE DATE: May 1, 2023

TITLE: Overcrowded Cages

PURPOSE:	Federal legislation sets guidelines for space requirements for animals, including rodents. Litters should normally be weaned between 18 to 28 days of age, depending on rodent species. Please assist Biomedical Research Model Services (BRMS) in complying with these federal regulations.
RESPONSIBILITY:	BRMS Animal Care Technicians (ACTs), BRMS Supervisors and Laboratory Research Staff
TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:	Self-study of this Policy

Definition:

An Overcrowded Cage is:

- More adults than allowed given the size of the cage.
- More adults than allowed with litter given the size of the cage.
- A litter is not weaned in a timely manner so that the birth of a new litter occurs before the older litter is removed.
- A litter is not weaned in a timely manner so that too many rodents are in a single cage.

Policy:

When an overcrowded cage is discovered, the cage will be marked and BRMS staff will notify the lab staff immediately. If an overcrowded cage is found, lab staff have until the **end of the following business day** to resolve the overcrowded cage issue.

When two litters of different ages are in a cage more stringent standards are necessary. If this is found during weekdays, the cage will be marked and BRMS staff will notify the lab staff immediately. **The lab members will then have one hour to separate the older litter.** If after one hour the older litter has not been separated, BRMS staff will separate the litter. If a “double” litter is found on a weekend or holiday, then BRMS staff will immediately separate the older litter and charge the lab.

Anytime caretakers feel an overcrowded cage needs immediate attention, animals will be separated.

The investigator will be charged \$50 for each overcrowded cage that is separated by the BRMS staff. This policy has been endorsed by the School of Medicine and Public Health's Animal Care and Use Committee with the expectation that investigators will monitor breeding cages closely enough to prevent this problem.

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Frequent notifications of overcrowded cages could result in immediate separation and charges from BRMS. In addition, the SMPH ACUC will be notified as a compliance concern.

All research teams are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to check their animals every Friday to assess the possibility of overcrowded cages on the weekend. On weekends or holidays, when BRMS staffing is very limited, any overcrowded cage found other than 2 litters in one cage, will be noted and arrangements will be made to have the lab contacted on the next business day (there will not be an immediate \$50 charge on weekends or holidays). Once notified, the policy applies as written above.

We recognize that there are some fragile rodents which may require specialized care or breeding schemes, such as delayed weaning, harem housing, or foster dams. These exemptions must be in an approved animal protocol. When an exemption is listed in the approved animal protocol, the lab staff is expected to mark the cages appropriately and notify BRMS staff when cages are present requiring the exemption. Unless the cage is labeled, the technician will treat the cage as if there is no exemption.

Federal regulations set a maximum number of rodents per cage based on weight of the animals (*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, 8th ed., p. 57, Table 3.2). If the number of animals in any cage appears to exceed what is allowed by regulation, the laboratory staff is responsible for providing evidence that animals are housed according to *Guide* requirements; otherwise BRMS staff will separate the animals into new cages to assure regulatory compliance. Evidence provided by laboratory staff must at minimum include weekly weighing of animals and documentation of weights to demonstrate housing density is appropriate.

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to Director of Facilities or Director of Research Services.

Revision	Revision Description	Effective Date
0	Initial Release	December 1, 2012
1	Committee Review and Revision	April 9, 2015
2	Statement added about caging requirements	June 24, 2015
3	No changes to policy, changed document format only	June 1, 2018
4	Minor changes	January 1, 2021
5	Minor changes to include all rodents	April 1, 2022
6	Committee review, significant changes	May 1, 2023

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