

Washington State University
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Guideline #14: The Separation of Species and Sick Animals

Approval Date: 6/16/2022

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Guideline for Separation of Animals is to describe recommendations for the physical separation of animals by species, source, and health status, as described in the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, Eighth Edition and Guide for the Care and Use of Agriculture Animals in Research, Fourth Edition.

B. Background

This Guideline is applicable to all WSU staff, research investigators, and technicians who provide care and/or use animals for research, teaching or testing.

C. Guideline

Separation of Rodents and Aquatics:

1. Physical separation of animals by species is recommended to prevent interspecies disease transmission and to eliminate the potential for anxiety and physiologic and behavioral changes due to interspecies conflict (Arndt et al. 2010, The Guide).
2. Separation should usually be accomplished by housing different species in separate rooms, but, in some instances, it may be possible with cages that have filtered air or separate ventilation, or isolators.
3. It may also be acceptable to house different species in the same room—for example, two species that have a similar pathogen status and are behaviorally compatible (PritchettCorning et al. 2009, The Guide), or aquatic species.

Separation of Agriculture Animals:

1. Agricultural animals of different species are typically kept in different enclosures to reduce interspecies conflict, meet the husbandry and environmental needs of the animals, and facilitate research and teaching (Ag. Guide).
2. Facility design and husbandry practices influence whether this can be accomplished in a manner that assures the welfare of the animals (Ag. Guide).
3. Mixing of compatible species (e.g., sheep and cattle) can often be accomplished more easily in extensive production situations than in intensive housing situations (Ag. Guide).
4. A OCV Veterinarian should recommend appropriate health and biosecurity practices if species are to be co-housed.

Sick Animal Separation:

1. Animals that are suspected of having contagious disease are isolated from healthy animals. When an entire group or room of animals is known or believed to be exposed to an infectious agent, the group is kept intact during the process of diagnosis, treatment, and control.

A. References

- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, Eighth Edition. Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, Commission on Life Sciences, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 2011.
- Guide for the Care and Use of Agriculture Animals in Research, Fourth Edition. American Dairy Science Association®, the American Society of Animal Science, and the Poultry Science Association.
- Arndt SS, Lohavech D, van't Klooster J, Ohl F. Co-species housing in mice and rats: Effects on physiological and behavioural stress responsivity. *Horm Behav.* 2010; 57:342–351.
- Pritchett-Corning KR, Chang FT, Festing MF. Breeding and housing laboratory rats and mice in the same room does not affect the growth or reproduction of either species. *JAALAS.* 2009; 48:492–498.