



**Cornell University**  
Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education

CARE516.01 **Cat Husbandry**

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe the routine husbandry procedures at Cornell University's animal facilities. This SOP is intended for use by all animal care staff who perform routine cat care. This SOP is approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and the Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education (CARE). Any exemption must be approved by the IACUC prior to its application.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
2. Materials
3. Procedures
4. Safety
5. Contingencies
6. References

---

**1) Introduction**

This SOP provides general husbandry guidelines for cats housed in research facilities at Cornell.

**2) Materials**

- Feed, water and bowls
- Litter and litter pan
- Enrichment equipment
- Sanitation equipment
- Scale

**3) Procedures**

**a) Animal Care**

- i) Observe all animals to assess their health and well-being daily, including weekends and holidays.
- ii) Identify animals by ear tattoos and cage cards.
- iii) Records and documentation
  - (1) Refer to CARE SOP 542 Maintaining clinical records for animal research models.
- iv) Feeding routine
  - (1) Feed animals to meet current National Research Council recommendations for feline nutrition.
  - (2) Store and deliver feed in a manner that minimizes contamination or spoilage.
  - (3) Offer water ad lib.
  - (4) Return bowls to the same cage when cats are housed in cages, to prevent cross contamination.
  - (5) Monitor water regularly to ensure that it is free of contaminants that could potentially expose animals to chemical or infectious agents. Refer to CARE SOP 544 Microbiological Monitoring Program for Conventional Lab Animal Facilities.
  - (6) Consult a CARE veterinarian when young cats reach maturity (e.g. after one year of age) in order to assess dietary protocols (e.g. adult vs. light/restricted food).
  - (7) Consult a CARE veterinarian if cats become over-conditioned (e.g. BCS=3.5-5/5) in order to assess a weight loss plan. Contact CARE veterinarian for assistance with assigning a BCS.
- v) Social and environmental enrichment.
  - (1) Group house cats and allow them to roam free within the room whenever possible.
  - (2) Provide enrichment devices in the room or cage (e.g., ladders, perches, toys, cardboard boxes, and blankets).
  - (3) Provide additional enrichment (e.g. additional exercise time, increased human contact, additional enrichment devices in the cage) if cats are housed individually.
- vi) Cleaning and sanitation
  - (1) Sanitize the cage/room frequently, as is appropriate to keep the animals clean and dry and to provide a healthy environment. The maximum time between cage sanitizing is two weeks.

- (2) Scoop litter and remove soiled litter daily. Perform a total litter change at least once per week. Observe for abnormal feces and call CARE staff if necessary.
- (3) Sanitize water bowls, feeders/food bowls and litter pans at least once per week.
- (4) Replace enrichment devices that are not sanitizable every two weeks or more frequently as needed.

**IMPORTANT:** Whenever quaternary ammonias are used for cleaning, thoroughly rinse and dry all surfaces before cats are allowed to come in contact with them. Cats are very susceptible to chemical burns from this compound.

## **b) Animal Health**

- i) Quarantine procedures
  - (1) Do not quarantine cats from approved vendors (eg. Liberty).
  - (2) Quarantine cats from unapproved vendors for two weeks. Refer to CARE SOP 605 Preventative Health Program for Cats.
- ii) Euthanasia and disposal of dead animals
  - (1) Euthanize cats according to CARE SOP 307 Euthanasia of Non-rodent Animals. Euthanasia is performed by trained and experienced staff only.
  - (2) Dispose of dead animals by incineration at the College of Veterinary Medicine

## **c) Facilities**

- i) Maintain room temperatures between 64 and 84° F and relative humidity between 30% and 70%.
- ii) Control lights with timers with a photoperiod of 12 to 14 hours of light. Check the timer performance regularly.
- iii) Space requirements
  - (1) Group house cats in a room with a minimum of four square feet of floor space per cat.
  - (2) When housed in cages, use an appropriate sized cage for the size and number of cats, meeting or exceeding recommendations set in Table 2.2 (pg. 28) of Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.
- iv) Pest control: Refer to CARE SOP 538 Vermin Control
- v) Transportation

- (1) Transport cats in filtered commercial cat transport boxes outside of Cornell facilities.
  - (2) Within Cornell, transport cats either in filtered crates or unfiltered crates wrapped in a material which prevents animal allergens from escaping into the environment. Refer to CARE SOP 547 Animals Transported and Used Outside Animal Facilities.
- vi) Waste management
- (1) Deposit non-regulated Medical Waste and soiled litter in dumpsters
  - (2) Incinerate Regulated Medical Waste at the Vet College, following EH&S policy.

#### **4) Safety**

- a) Handle cats carefully as they may bite or scratch. Any incident of this nature must be reported as an accident report to EH&S  
<http://prp.ehs.cornell.edu/Acc-Inj/>
- b) If you are a pregnant woman, seek medical counseling from Gannett before working with cats.
- c) Zoonosis: <http://www.research.cornell.edu/care/zoonoses.html>
- d) Allergens:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/Care/documents/OHS/AllergyPreventionFactSheet.pdf>

#### **5) Contingencies**

- a) Emergency veterinary care is available at all times including after working hours and on weekends and holidays through CARE. The CARE pager number is 1-800-349-2456.
- b) Contact the facility manager for facility emergencies.

#### **6) References**

- CARE SOP 307, Euthanasia of Non-Rodent Animals:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE307.pdf>
- CARE SOP538, Vermin Program:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE538.pdf>
- CARE SOP 542, Maintaining clinical records for animal research models:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE542.pdf>
- CARE SOP 544, Microbiological monitoring program for conventional lab animal facilities:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE543.pdf>

- CARE SOP 547, Animals transported and used outside animal facilities:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE547.pdf>
- CARE SOP 605, Preventative health program for cats:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE605.pdf>
- CARE SOP 707, Animal related injury:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE707.pdf>
- CARE SOP 713, Hygiene-Hand Washing:  
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/SOPs/CARE713.pdf>
- Accident reports: <http://prp.ehs.cornell.edu/Acc-Inj/>
- Zoonotic Hazards: <http://www.research.cornell.edu/care>
- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. National Research Council; National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 1996.
- Nutrition Requirements of Dogs & Cats,. National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2006. <http://www.nap.edu> (Accessed August 13, 2008)

Written by/date :  
Jackie Wright

Effective date :

Review date :  
October 2008

Referee:  
Danielle Turner

SOP :  
CAREXXX.XX