



Cornell University
Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education

CARE563.01 Environmental Enrichment Program
for Guinea Pigs

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe an appropriate environmental enrichment program for guinea pigs. This SOP is intended for investigators and anyone caring for guinea pigs. This procedure is approved by the Cornell 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.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of environmental enrichment is to provide guinea pigs with the opportunity to fulfill and express basic non-injurious behavioral needs that are typical to the species. Meeting these behavioral needs by providing a biologically relevant environment (i.e., opportunity to hide, socialize, and forage) will optimize physiologic and psychological wellbeing thereby enhancing animal welfare.

2. Materials

- Forage material (e.g. hay, fresh leafy greens).
- Hiding object (e.g., large diameter PVC pipe)
- Toys (e.g., small PVC pipe or plastic balls)

3. Procedures

- a. Social Environment

Note: Guinea pigs scare easily. Minimize noise and sudden movements adjacent to housing enclosures.

- i. Pair- or group-house same sex guinea pigs

- ii. Guinea Pigs may be singly housed in some cases:
 1. Incompatible animals
 2. Animals under a specific protocol for which the IACUC has approved single housing.
 3. Animals isolated for medical reasons by the veterinary staff.

Note: House individual animals in a manner that allows them to at least see, hear, or smell others.

- iii. Handle gently and frequently (e.g. petting, playing, gentle vocalization).

b. Dietary Enrichment

- i. Provide autoclaved hay daily.
- ii. Occasionally (e.g. 3 times weekly), provide fresh leafy vegetables. Consult with CARE and PI prior to providing dietary enrichment.

Note: Rinse vegetables thoroughly prior to use.

c. Objects

- i. Provide at least one toy in all cages (e.g. metal or plastic chains or rings mounted on the cage side).
- ii. Provide a shelter (e.g., large diameter PVC pipe).

4. Safety

When working with animals wear appropriate PPE, and be aware of allergy, zoonosis and injury risks. Refer to appropriate references below.

5. Contingencies

a. Post contact information for emergency assistance in a conspicuous location within the animal facility.

b. Emergency Veterinary care is available at all times including after working hours, weekends and holidays by CARE (pager 1-800-349-2456).

6. References

- Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. National Research Council; National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 1996.
- Enrichment Strategies for Laboratory Animals, ILAR Journal, Volume 46, Number 2, 2005. National Research Council.
- Making Lives Easier for Animals in Research Labs, Animal Welfare Institute, 2007.
- Comfortable Quarters for Laboratory Animals, Animal Welfare Institute, 2002
- Zoonosis : <http://www.research.cornell.edu/care/zoonoses.html>

- Allergens Prevention:
[http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/OHS/AllergyPreventionFact Sheet.pdf](http://www.research.cornell.edu/CARE/documents/OHS/AllergyPreventionFactSheet.pdf)
- CARE 707 Animal Related Injury:
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/care/documents/SOPs/CARE707.pdf>
- CARE 715 Personal Protective Equipment:
<http://www.research.cornell.edu/care/documents/SOPs/CARE715.pdf>

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