

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next review
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	22 February 2019	22 February 2019	February 2022
Standard Statement				
Purpose	To outline the conditions that rabbits are housed in at UNSW			
Scope	All staff and research trainees at UNSW and affiliated centres and institutes involved in or working with rabbits for scientific purposes (e.g. researchers, teachers, students, Animal Facility staff)			
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, subject to any areas specifically restricted.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Standard				

1. Preamble

Rabbits are housed in accordance with the Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP) 'Guidelines for the Housing of Rabbits in Scientific Institutions', as per condition 3 of UNSW's Accreditation as an Animal Research Establishment with the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Rabbits are housed in floor pens compliant with the ARRP guidelines. Rabbits may only be housed in cages with the express permission of the UNSW Animal Care and Ethics Committees (ACECs) on the basis of compelling evidence for the need to use such housing. Lack of space or facilities for floor pens is not considered sufficient justification for the use of cages.

1.1. Scenarios where housing in ARRP compliant cages is justified

The UNSW ACECs recognises only the following four scenarios where housing in ARRP compliant cages is justified:

1. Pre-surgical acclimatisation of up to 7 days, where rabbits will require post-surgical recovery in cages; or
2. Post-surgical recovery of up to 7 days, where confinement is required to reduce the risk of post-operative injuries; or
3. Recovery from severe injuries of up to 7 days; or
4. During disease investigation/management or illness, where cage-housing is required to isolate a sick animal (as determined by a veterinarian) to ensure effective monitoring/treatment.

Such cage-housing must be enriched e.g. provision of fresh vegetables and fruit, shelter boxes, cardboard boxes, ropes, gnawing blocks, shredded paper, oaten hay, lucerne rolls, balls, staff interaction, pair housing in double cages etc.

Justification for the above scenarios is as follows:

1. to provide a confined area where observation of wounds and ambulation can be more effectively monitored for infection/self-mutilation (stress related);
2. reduces interference from other rabbits over-grooming surgical/injury sites and compromising suture integrity;
3. administration of (post-operative) medication is less stressful for the rabbit;
4. minimises/eliminates the fear/flight response (post-operatively) which predisposes the rabbit to self-injury from impact with surrounding structures and companion rabbits.

Cage-housing of rabbits deemed ‘fighters’ is not justified and not approved by the ACECs. Fighters are to be housed in floor pens compliant with the ARRPs guidelines in socially-compatible groups. If this is not possible, fighters are to be housed singly in floor pens with olfactory, visual and, if possible, physical contact with adjacent rabbits. Attempts to re-socialise fighters must be made.

Accountabilities				
Responsible Officer	Director, Research Ethics & Compliance Support			
Contact Officer	Coordinator, Animal Ethics Email: animalethics@unsw.edu.au Phone: 9385 6868			
Supporting Information				
Legislative Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007 • Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2013 • Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) • Animal Research Regulation 2010 (NSW) • ARRP Guidelines for the Housing of Rabbits in Scientific Institutions 2003 			
Parent Document (Policy)	UNSW Research Code of Conduct			
Supporting Documents	UNSW Animal Research Adverse Event Reporting Standard Operating Procedure			
Related Documents	Nil			
Superseded Documents	Nil			
File Number	2014/05962#90			
Definitions and Acronyms				
Animal Care and Ethics Committees (ACECs)	Animal Care and Ethics Committees constituted according to the terms of reference and membership determined in the <i>Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013)</i> .			
Animal Research Establishment	A corporation which uses animals in research and teaching in NSW and is accredited as an animal research establishment under the Animal Research Act 1985.			
Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP)	A statutory body created by the Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW) to participate in monitoring the self-regulatory process that was established within institutions by the Act.			
Revision History				
Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	22 February 2019	22 February 2019	New local standard