Georgia State University
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

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Date Reviewed: ____________________________
Date(s) Revised: ___________________________
IACUC Chair Signature: ___________________________

It is the responsibility of the Georgia State University (GSU) Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to ensure judicious and humane use of animals used in its teaching and research programs that is consistent with federal requirements.*

Ferret Cage Sizes

Currently, there are no United States regulatory guidelines for ferret cage size. Specifically, the Animal Welfare Act, Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy), as well as the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals 8th Edition (the Guide) do not discuss cage size requirements for ferrets. However, the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123) and the Laboratory Animal Medicine 3rd Edition American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine Series provides cage space recommendations. The ETS 123 recommends a minimum floor area per ferret over 600 grams be a minimum of 465 in². The Laboratory Animal Medicine 3rd Edition recommends 288 in² cage size per adult ferret.

GSU often houses adult male and female ferrets which are larger than 600 grams. They are housed in Allentown cages. The cage size is 728 in². The male ferrets are singly housed, whereas the female ferrets are socially housed up to 3 females per cage, which will make the floor space per adult female ferret 242.7 in².

Although the floor area per adult female is potentially less than recommended by the ETS123 and Laboratory Animal Medicine recommendations, it is felt that socially housing the female ferrets is beneficial as they are social species and no signs of any adverse effects have been detected. Further, it is felt that housing the females at up to 3 ferrets per cage has had no adverse impact on the health and well-being of the ferrets. The females, when housed socially, will sleep together, engage in play, groom each other, and will eat from the same food dish simultaneously with no untoward interactions toward one another. Further, the cage conditions do not appear to be compromised by extra soiling when group housed up to 3 per cage, as the floors are perforated with a catch pan under the cage. The male ferrets are singly housed, as male ferrets are aggressive to each other.

Note that the ferrets not used in ABSL2 studies have 24-hour access to a playpen once every 7 days (in other words, the ferrets rotate through the playpen such that a given ferret or group of ferrets has 24-hour access to the playpen at least once a week). The playpen is filled with

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enrichment items (i.e., toys, hammocks, PVC pipe). The male ferrets are singly housed whereas the female ferrets are group housed while in the playpen.