



## STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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This VSC guideline has been written in order to clearly communicate current standards to facility users. Questions should be directed to Reese Zasio (725-3882) or Dr. Sherril Green (723-6113).

### Requirements for Housing Breeding Mice

1. No more than **one litter** should be present in a standard shoebox-sized cage, in the company of no more than **one or two adults**. Breeding pairs are relatively easy to manage within these requirements, but if more than one female will be placed with a breeder male (harem breeding) any female that appears pregnant must be removed and housed singly prior to giving birth. If an “accidental” birth occurs in a cage holding more than two adults, all adults other than the mother (and possibly the father if a breeding pair is desirable) should be removed as soon as possible. If the mother cannot be identified, the females and litter(s) may be moved to a large-style cage until weaning (contact a VSC supervisor for assistance). *One possible exception: If neonatal mice are being produced for experimental use and will be PROMPTLY euthanized by postnatal day 7, it is possible to house a continuous breeding trio.*
2. Litters should be weaned promptly by 21 days of age (for most strains), separated by sex, and housed no more than five per cage. Certain mutant and inbred lines may benefit from a later weaning, but in any case it is seldom justified to house a litter with the dam longer than 28 days.
3. In the case of male mice, even five per cage may be too crowded, and fighting may result. This is especially true with certain aggressive strains, such as FVB, SJL and BALB/c. If fighting lesions are seen, affected males should be separated, and if severely injured, sacrificed. If injured animals are valuable and will be kept alive, the responsible person should contact the VSC clinical staff to arrange for any necessary observation or treatment.
4. Unless there are specific standing orders which give the VSC authority to wean, it is the research group’s responsibility to observe litters and breeder animals frequently to quickly identify and remedy problems or obtain help in dealing with them.
5. VSC staff will also observe colony conditions and communicate with the lab responsible for breeding cages when overcrowding is identified. The VSC is also authorized to clean, separate, wean or sacrifice animals if unacceptable conditions persist after the laboratory is notified. The investigator’s lab will be billed for the labor should this be necessary.

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