

UC Davis Office of the Attending Veterinarian Standards of Care

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Enabled by: The Guide,
The Ag Guide,
AVMA, PPM, PHS
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Title: Husbandry Care for Birds

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for birds including; Passerines (e.g., finches) and Psittacines (e.g., parrots, love birds and cockatiels).

II. Policy:

All departments providing care for birds must meet or exceed these minimum requirements which are based on the Public Health Service Policy and the ILAR *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*.

Federal and State agencies may require permits to remove and house birds from the wild. Collecting permits should be in-place and displayed at the housing facility.

III. Procedure:

Daily: (365 days a year without exception)

Observe each animal and report any health concerns to the appropriate Veterinary Service. If housed indoors, check room temperature and record the high and low temperatures (temperature range should be between 61-81 degrees F). Some birds such as parrots prefer low to mid 80's, especially during breeding season. Report out of range temperatures to Facilities. . Check to ensure birds have access to an approved manufactured bird feed diet (such as Zupreem® or Roudybush®); most birds should be fed ad libitum. Feed type should be appropriate for bird age, species, and breeding requirements. Check water bottles, and top off if needed. Check open water cups and rinse and refill. Check automatic water lines to ensure proper operation. Clean and organize room.

Weekly:

Supplemental pelleted feed with a small amount of chopped vegetables appropriate for the species, and time of year, and during a molt. Change cage pan liners. Clean wire cage floors if there is significant fecal buildup. Rinse and refill water bottles.

Monthly:

Change or clean wire bottom cages. Disinfect feeders and waterers.

Quarterly:

Clean and disinfect flight cages and aviaries. Remove and clean racks and automatic watering

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lines. Refer to SOC 50-103 on Quality Assurance and Monitoring. Clean the animal room (including walls and floors). Trim toenails and beaks as needed.

Facilities and Environment

The facility should be maintained in such a way as to allow the birds to keep themselves clean and free from predators (if housed outdoors), prevent bird injury, escape, and entrapment, and avoid unnecessary accumulation of bird waste. Air quality and the thermal environment should be maintained by ventilation, cooling, and heating to provide birds with the appropriate environmental conditions for their age and time of the year.

Floors should be moisture-resistant, nonabsorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth.

Since birds housed in outdoor aviaries are maintained under ambient temperatures, protection from severe conditions should be provided, by the use of shade and wind and rain proof structures.

Floor Area and Space Utilization

Space allocation should be based on type of housing, species and age of bird, bird behavior, and body weight. Please refer to the Guide For The Care And Use Of Laboratory Animals for minimum floor space recommendations for birds (pg. 60, table 3.4).

Caging

Primary enclosures should be constructed with materials that balance the needs of the animal with the ability to provide for sanitation. They should have smooth impervious surfaces with minimal ledges, angles, corners, and overlapping surfaces so that accumulation of dirt, debris, and moisture is reduced and satisfactory cleaning and disinfecting are possible. They should be constructed of materials that resist corrosion and withstand rough handling without chipping, cracking, or rusting. Less durable materials such as wood can provide a more appropriate environment in some situations, and can be used to construct perches, climbing structures, and/or resting areas. Rusting or oxidized cages that threaten the health or safety of the animals must be repaired or replaced.

Environmental Enrichment:

Social animals must be socially housed per the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (the Guide) and IACUC Social Housing Policy:

Any Study related exceptions must be approved in the IACUC protocol or by the clinical Veterinarian for health related concerns. Refer to the Standard of Care on Environmental Enrichment. If perches are provided as enrichment, use dowels appropriate in diameter for a given species.

Identification:

Birds can be identified by cage cards, numbered/colored leg bands, or a combination. Cages should be numbered for identification purposes. When birds are group housed, a list of each bird in each of these primary enclosures should be maintained and readily available.