

## UC Davis Office of the Attending Veterinarian Standards of Care

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Date: 8/4/15  
Enabled by: The Guide,  
PHS, PPM  
Supersedes: None

### Title: Husbandry Care for Raptors

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#### I. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the minimum standards of care for raptors.

#### II. Policy:

All units providing care for raptors 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 Procedures: (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. If housed outdoor check the integrity of the primary enclosure. Feed raptors which should be appropriate for age, species, breeding and feeding requirements. The amount of food offered may change based on the amount of food consumed. If needed, remove any food that was not eaten from the previous feeding. Ensure water bowls are free of feces and debris, rinse and fill if needed. Document parameters listed above.

##### Weekly Procedures:

Clean primary enclosure (outdoor or indoor) which includes cleaning the cage/pen/aviary floor if there is significant fecal buildup. Perches should be spot cleaned as needed but not less than once a week. Water bowls should be sanitized weekly.

##### Bi-weekly Procedures:

Shipping crates that are used to house owls must be replaced with a clean crate every two weeks unless there are eggs or young birds in the crate.

##### Quarterly Procedures:

Clean and disinfect aviaries including any stationary items in flight cages, stationary cages, and aviaries. It is suggested that routine health assessments be performed on raptors quarterly and if necessary, trim talons and beaks. For indoor housing check room lights to ensure that the light

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cycle is correct.

### 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 outside), prevent bird injury, escape, and entrapment, and avoid unnecessary accumulation of bird waste. In indoor facilities 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.

For indoor facilities floors should be moisture-resistant, nonabsorbent, impact-resistant, and relatively smooth.

Birds housed in outdoor aviaries are maintained under ambient temperatures, however 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, sex, age of bird, bird behavior, the number of animal per cage and body weight. Cages should be large enough to provide room for normal behavior and wing-flapping where tall cages provide the ability of birds to get out of reach, enhancing their feeling of safety and longer cages support the ability of flight. General considerations for space allocation can be found in *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (page 55).

### 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 should be repaired or replaced.

### Identification:

Raptors can be identified by cage cards, numbered/colored leg bands, or a combination. Cages/pens/aviaries 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.

### Feed:

Raptors should be fed palatable and uncontaminated feed based on age and species-specific requirements. Food presentation should foster natural foraging and feeding behaviors. Any uneaten food should be removed before the next scheduled feeding. Water bowls should be provided and checked daily.

### Environmental Enrichment:

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Some raptor species are social animals and may require group housing. Due to the diversity of species-specific needs, group housing should be evaluated on a species and case-by-case basis. If perches are provided as enrichment, use dowels appropriate in diameter for a given species. Refer to the Environmental Enrichment policy for additional information. Additionally, refer to the Social Housing policy for additional information.

### Euthanasia:

Euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the AVMA recommendations, current edition, and the Standards of Care for Euthanasia. Methods not in accordance with these guiding documents and principals must be justified in the animal care and use protocol.

### References:

1. Guidelines to the Use of Wild Birds in Research. 2010. Fair J, Paul E, Jones J, eds. Washington: Ornithological Council, Available at [http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/documents/guidlines/Guidelines\\_August2010.pdf](http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/documents/guidlines/Guidelines_August2010.pdf); accessed August 20, 2010.