



Policy on the Exercise of Dogs

Background:

Animals maintained in a laboratory environment may have a more restricted activity profile than those in a free-ranging state. Animals should have the opportunity to exhibit species-typical activity patterns. Federal regulations indicate that additional opportunities for activity should be provided to dogs when housing is less than twice that recommended^{1,2}. Activities may include being walked on a leash, having access to a run, or being moved into another area (such as a room, larger cage, or outdoor pen) for social contact, play, or exploration¹. Because dogs have been shown to benefit from positive human interaction³, including social interaction with humans during exercise is also recommended¹.

Policy:

- Dogs housed in runs do not require additional opportunity for exercise provided that dogs housed singly have at least twice the minimum required floor space, or dogs housed in pairs or groups have the sum of the minimum required floor space for each dog. The space requirement calculations are the following:

$$\text{Minimum Floor Area (sq. ft.)} = \frac{(\text{inches from nose to base of tail} + 6)^2}{144 \text{ sq. in}}$$

- For dogs that are housed singly with less than twice the minimum floor area, exercise may be provided by:
 - Releasing one or more dogs into the animal room or other enclosed area for at least 15-20 minutes three times each week. Compatible animals of the same sex may be released into the animal housing room or other enclosed exercise area concurrently. Interaction with other dogs or humans during this exercise period is strongly recommended. Exercise periods will be recorded in the daily log of the animal room.
 - Walking dogs indoors on a leash for at least 15 minutes on five to seven days a week. This will be the responsibility of the investigator.
 - Similar activities approved by the institutional veterinarian.
 - Note: Forced exercise such as swimming or treadmills does not meet the exercise requirements.

Exemptions:

- **Quarantine and Conditioning:** During the quarantine and conditioning period, the opportunity for exercise will automatically be limited to daily cleaning of the primary enclosure to prevent the spread of disease between dogs within a group and between groups of animals. The quarantine period will end at the discretion of the veterinary staff, but will not exceed 30 days unless authorized in writing by the institutional veterinarian.
- **Medical Exemptions:** The veterinary staff may suspend the exercise requirement for any dog for medical reasons, provided that the exemption is documented and justified in the animal's medical record. Medical exemptions must be reviewed and documented every 30 days unless the medical condition is permanent. The veterinary staff may exempt a dog from the exercise requirement if the dog's behavior is a potential hazard to personnel.
- **Dogs under 12 weeks of age:** Regulations do not require pups under 12 weeks of age to be included in the exercise plan. Human contact with 6-12 week old pups is encouraged.
- **Protocol Exemption:** An investigator may request an exemption from the exercise requirement for scientific reasons in the animal use protocol. The reason for the exemption must be justified in the protocol, and the protocol must be approved by the institutional veterinarian and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Exemptions of this kind must be reviewed and approved annually by the IACUC or its designee.

References:

1. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. 1996. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
2. Regulations of the Animal Welfare Act, CFR, Title 9, Chapter 1, Subpart A.
3. Rollin, B. E. 1990. Ethics and research animals: Theory and practice. In: The Experimental Animal in Biomedical Research, volume 1:A. Survey of Scientific and Ethical Issues for Investigators (B. Rollin and M. Kesel, ed.), CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL.

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