

Introductory Course for Commercial Dealers of Guinea Pigs, Hamsters, Rabbits

Part 7: Husbandry Standards





Course Objectives

By the end of this presentation, you should be able to, as appropriate for guinea pigs, hamsters or rabbits:

1. Describe minimum food and water requirements
2. Describe access and cleaning for food receptacles
3. Describe the frequency and types of cleaning and sanitization methods for primary enclosures
4. Explain general housekeeping and pest control requirements
5. Explain staffing and employee training requirements
6. Describe the requirements for compatible grouping

Food and Water Requirements



Feeding

Requirements:

- Must feed animals at least once a day
- Except as otherwise required to provide adequate veterinary care
- Document in Plan of Veterinary Care



Food for Guinea Pigs, Hamsters, Rabbits

- Food must be appropriate for each species and must be:
 - Wholesome
 - Uncontaminated by: rodents, insects, vermin, medications, chemicals, or animal waste
 - Palatable
 - Appropriate amount for animals
 - Digestible
 - Nutritious
- Best practices include consulting with a veterinarian with experience in nutrition for the species



Food for Guinea Pigs and Hamsters

- Food in basic diet must be equivalent to commercial pelleted rations
- Hamsters can be fed pelleted feed on floor
- Good quality fruits or vegetables may be used as supplements:
 - Provided they are consistent with individual dietary requirements (especially beneficial to provide guinea pigs with sufficient Vitamin C)
 - May be placed on bedding in primary enclosure
 - Uneaten portions and soiled bedding must be removed

Food Receptacles

- Make accessible to all animals in enclosure
- Choose location to minimize contamination
- Keep clean and sanitize at least every two weeks
- In self-feeders, prevent molding, caking, deterioration of food



Watering

- Potable water must be provided daily
- Except as otherwise required to provide adequate veterinary care
- Keep clean and sanitize at least every two weeks
- For guinea pigs and hamsters
 - May feed supplements that supply normal water requirements
 - Open water receptacles must be placed to minimize contamination





Cleaning and Sanitization

Cleaning Definitions

- Cleaning
 - Removes visible waste and dirt
 - Physical removal (scooping up) of fecal material is better than hosing it away
 - Prevents distribution of microscopic particles of feces in the air
 - Helps prevent transmission of fecal-borne germs
 - Visible waste and dirt may inactivate disinfectants
 - Remove as much as possible before disinfecting

Cleaning Primary Enclosures: Guinea Pigs and Hamsters

- Clean often enough to prevent accumulation of excreta and debris
- Transfer animals to another primary enclosure when
 - Enclosure becomes soiled or wet to a degree that may be harmful or uncomfortable
 - There is water system leakage, dead/dying animal discharge, spoiled food, or condensation

Cleaning Primary Enclosures: Rabbits

- Periodically clean to keep reasonably free of:
 - Excreta
 - Hair
 - Cobwebs
 - Other debris
- Do not allow rabbits to become wet during cleaning



Cleaning Primary Enclosures: Rabbits

- For primary enclosures with:
 - Solid floors:
 - Remove and replace litter at least once each week
 - Wire or mesh floors:
 - Clean troughs or pans at least once a week
 - Maintain worm bins, if used, in a sanitary condition



Sanitization Definitions

- Sanitization
 - Makes surfaces physically clean
 - Helps remove dirt and germs that you can't see
 - Removes and destroys germs which may make animals ill:
 - Bacteria
 - Viruses
 - Fungi
 - Protozoa
 - Worms



Sanitization Methods

- Must use one of these methods for primary enclosures:
 1. Wash in hot (180° F water) and soap/detergent
 - May use a mechanical cage washer
 2. Wash with detergent followed by disinfectant solutions or combination detergent/disinfectant product
 - Followed with clean water rinse
 3. Clean all soiled surfaces with live steam





Sanitization of Primary Enclosures: How Often?

- Guinea pigs and hamsters
 - Must clean and sanitize at least once every 2 weeks or more often as needed
- Rabbits
 - Must clean and sanitize at least once every 30 days or more often as needed

Sanitization of Primary Enclosures

- Guinea pigs, hamsters, rabbits:
 - Must sanitize a primary enclosure that has housed animals previously before any animal can be re-introduced to the enclosure

General Housekeeping

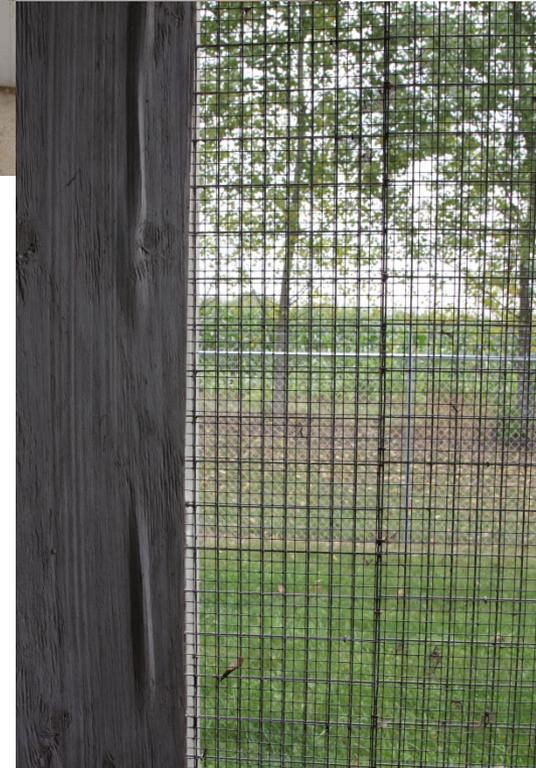
- Buildings and Grounds:
 - Clean, good repair
 - No trash, waste, weeds, etc.



Pest Control

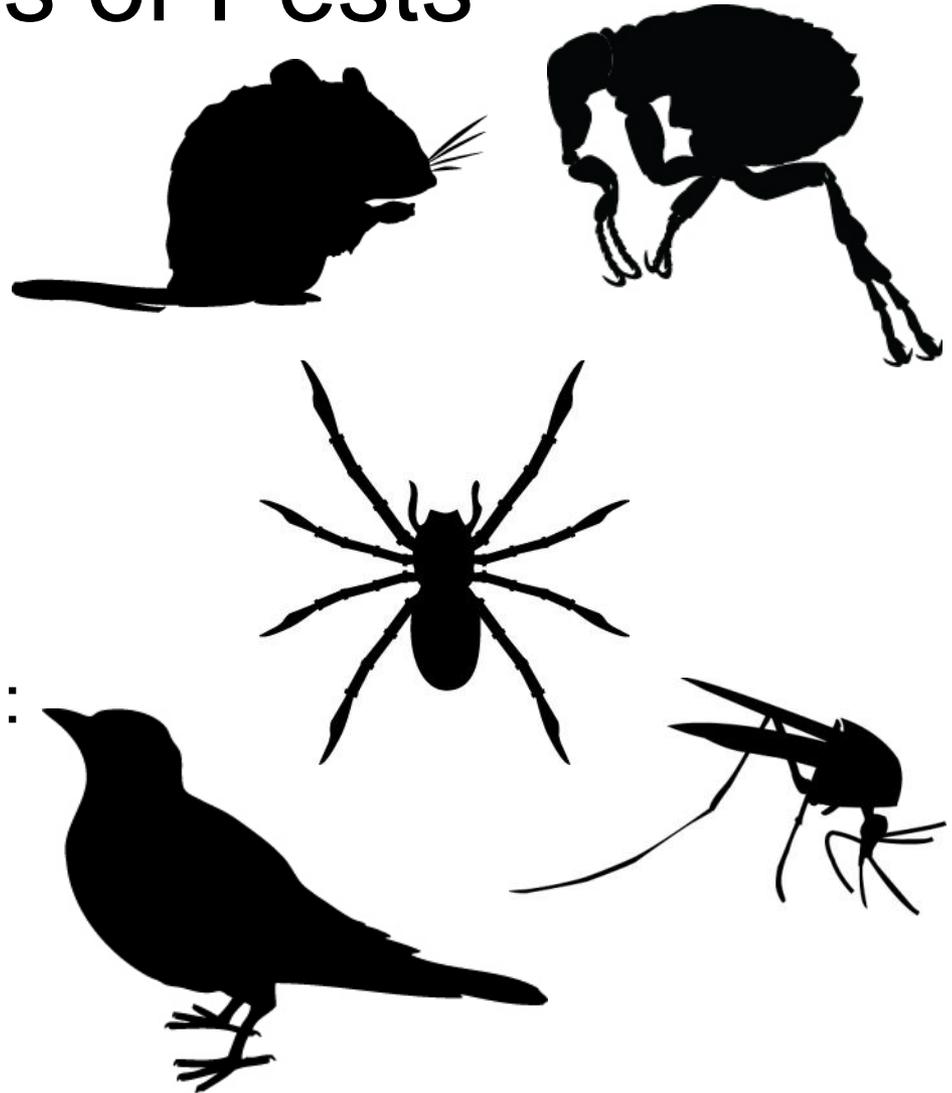
Pest Control Program

- Have and maintain an effective program to control:
 - Insects
 - Ectoparasites
 - Birds
 - Mammals
- Discuss insect and ectoparasite control with your veterinarian
- Never pose a hazard to the species being protected



Types of Pests

- Mammals:
 - Rats, mice, moles
- Birds:
 - Starlings, pigeons, sparrows
- Ectoparasites:
 - Fleas, ticks, mites, lice
- Arthropods (insects):
 - Flies, mosquitoes, gnats
- Arachnids:
 - Spiders, scorpions





Signs of Pests

- Observe animals and facilities for signs of pests
- Common signs of pests:
 - Seeing the pest (rodents, insects, birds)
 - Finding droppings (rodents, fleas, birds)
 - Other evidence (chewed surfaces, feathers, egg packets, webs)
 - Effects on animals (itching, sores, hair loss)

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Employees



Employees are Important

- Have enough employees to carry out care and husbandry practices according to regulations
- Must be supervised by caretaker who has a background in animal husbandry or care



How Many Employees?

- Depends on:
 - Number of animals and care requirements
 - Facility condition, design and construction
 - Employee responsibilities
 - How much to each employee?
 - Enough time to do everything?
 - Enough training?

Hint

- If repeatedly out of compliance on husbandry issues, ask, are there enough people to get everything done?

Classification and Separation

Compatible Grouping

- Animals housed together in primary enclosures must be compatible
- Guinea pigs, hamsters and rabbits must only be housed with their own species





Specific Requirements

- Guinea Pigs – except for harem breeding, pre-weanling guinea pigs may be housed only with their parents
- Hamsters – females with nursing litters must be housed alone
 - Licensee must apply to APHIS Administrator for approval of harem breeding
- Rabbits – may be housed in an enclosure with other species when specifically required for scientific purposes and approved by IACUC

Quarantine Requirements

- Guinea pigs, hamsters and rabbits
 - Animals under quarantine or treatment for a communicable disease must be separated from their own species or other susceptible species in order to minimize spread of the disease



Conclusion

You should now be able to, as appropriate for guinea pigs, hamsters or rabbits:

1. Describe minimum food and water requirements
2. Describe access and cleaning for food receptacles
3. Describe the frequency and types of cleaning and sanitization methods for primary enclosures
4. Explain general housekeeping and pest control requirements
5. Explain staffing and employee training requirements
6. Describe how to classify and separate animals

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Questions?

Acknowledgments

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