






OFFICE OF LABORATORY ANIMAL CARE

# Working Instructions

<b>WIN Number:</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>Rodent Health Check</b>	<b>Revision #:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Date Effective:</b>	<b>5/16/25</b>		<b>Supersedes:</b>	<b>0</b>

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## PROCEDURE

All work instructions must be demonstrated by the trainer and performed by the trainee.

### Safety:

1. For mid and high-level cages, use a step stool to avoid overhead lifting and to better visualize the higher cages.
2. Knee protection is available for kneeling on the ground to visualize lower cages.

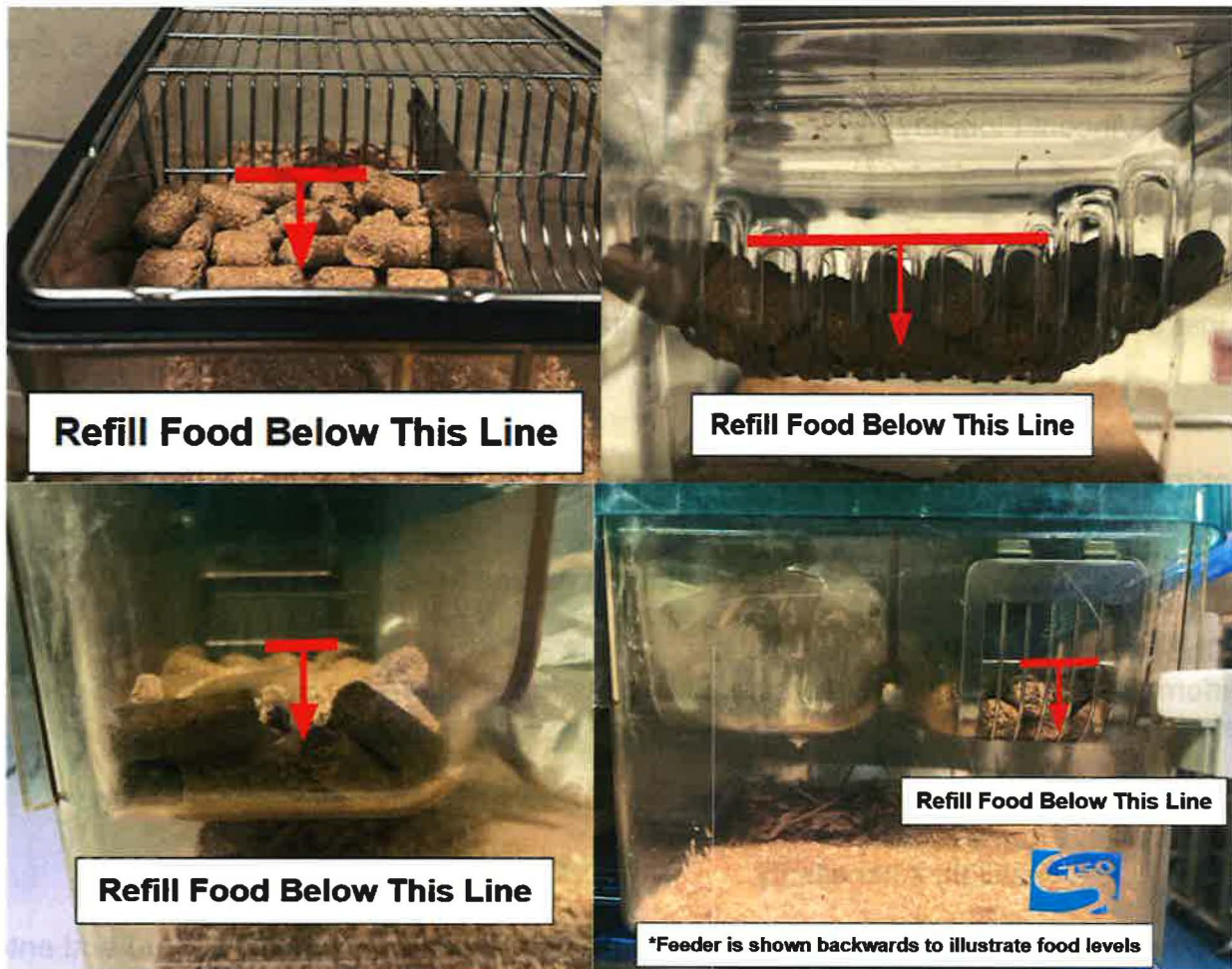
### Health Check:

1. Perform health checks in the morning, unless instructed otherwise by the Facility Supervisor or Veterinarian.
2. Observe animals from the front of the cage and assess for any health concerns and abnormalities.
  - a. Use a flashlight if necessary.
3. Label health concerns with a pink health check Post-it® placed on the cage card and enter into approved OLAC reporting software.
  - a. Write the date, initials, cage card number, and condition on the pink health check Post-it®
  - b. Emergency health concerns will follow the same procedure as above and in addition, notify the veterinary staff immediately via the "health-non-usda" slack group.

4. If animals are observed fighting and/or fighting wounds are observed on animals, remove the aggressor animal(s) and place them into a new cage.
  - a. Place the aggressor animal into the new cage with a white New Cage Created by OLAC Post-it® on the cage card. Place a new cage card on the cage. Check the Aggressor box on the cage card to indicate the reason the animal is single-housed.
  - b. Enter this information into approved OLAC reporting software.
  - c. Refer to Appendix A to identify fight wounds.
5. Remove dead animal(s) from the cage and place in a bag.
  - a. Label the bag with PI name, cage barcode number, room number, and date.
  - b. Enter this information into approved OLAC reporting software.
  - c. Place the bagged and labeled carcass into the designated carcass storage area.

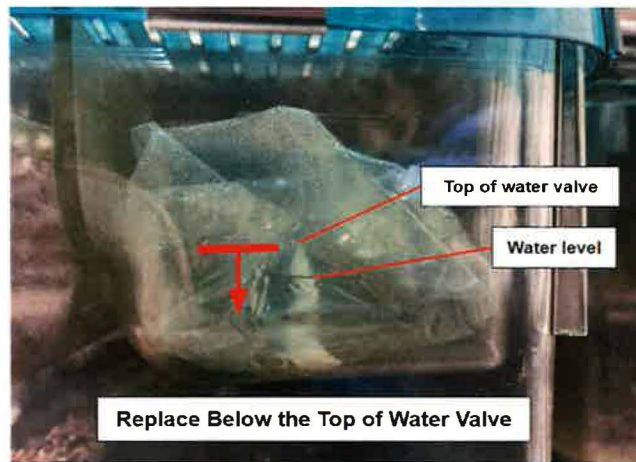
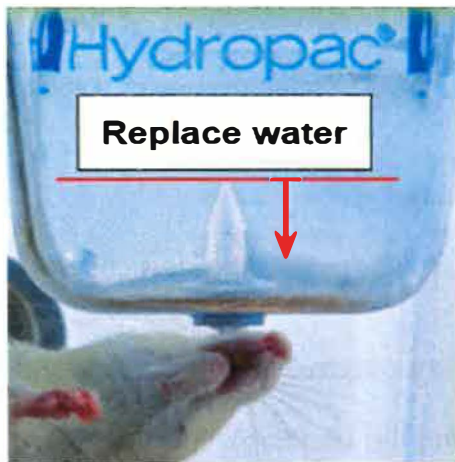
**Food:**

1. Provide approved food ad libitum.
2. Refill food hoppers once the level falls below the indicated line as indicated below.

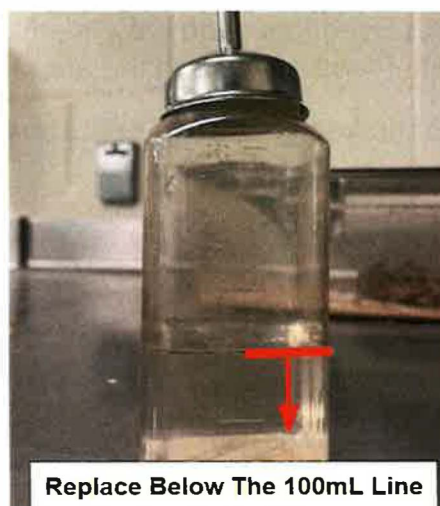
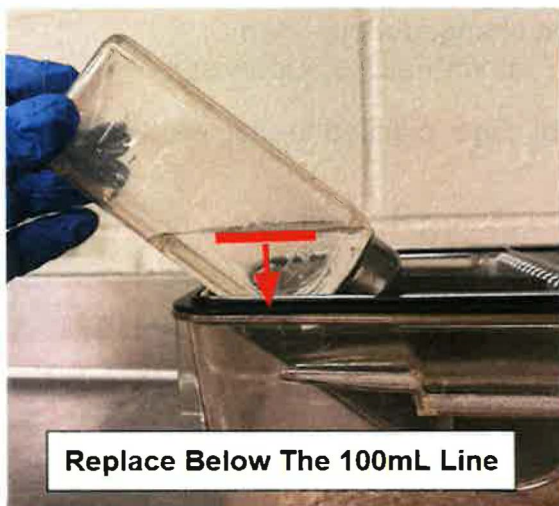
**Water:**

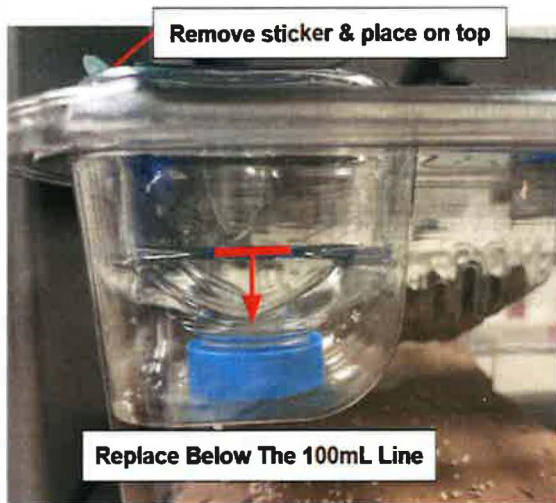
1. Provide approved water ad libitum.

2. Replace Hydropacs once the water levels fall below the top “spike” of the water valve as indicated below.
  - a. Open the cage and remove the used hydropac pouch and water valve.
  - b. Place a new water valve into the feeder, then place a new hydropac pouch.
  - c. Check for water leaks around the hydropac and water valve. If water is observed leaking, replace the hydropac pouch.
  - d. Check that water comes out of the water valve by pressing a gloved finger against the valve and look for water actively dripping from the valve opening.
    - If no water is observed, check that the hydropac pouch and valve are inserted correctly. Replace the hydropac pouch and/or valve if water does not come out of the valve.



3. Replace Water bottles that are at or below  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total volume of the bottle or at the top of the bottle lid as indicated below.
  - a. Place a clean, filled bottle into the cage.
    - Remove the sticker on innovative water bottles and place the sticker on the opposite end of the bottle.
  - b. Check that the bottle top is securely affixed to the water bottle and that there are no cracks or other damage on the bottle.
  - c. After placing the clean, filled bottle in the clean cage, check that there is no immediate/constant leak from the bottle into the cage.
    - Replace the bottle if any damage or leaking is noticed.





### Bedding/Cage Condition:

1. Assess the bedding of the cage for heavy soiling, flooding, mold, pests, and defective or broken parts.
2. Spot change the cage if one or more of these parameters are observed. Refer to Appendix B for examples.
  - a. Flooded cage (e.g. water leaking from source soaking the bedding)
  - b. No dry rest area present in the bedding
  - c. Bedding discoloration (mold present)
  - d. All four (4) corners of the cage bottom are wet
    - **Note:** If two (2) wet corners are observed, pull the cage out and observe the back of the cage to determine if a cage change is necessary.
  - e. Wetness from one (1) corner connects to another corner
    - **Note:** If two (2) wet corners are observed, pull the cage out of the rack and look at the bottom to determine if the wet spots are touching.
  - f. Top bedding layer contains 50% or more feces
  - g. Condensation is present on the sides of the cage or lid
  - h. Animals are observed with a poorly groomed and/or wet hair coat and are otherwise healthy
  - i. Signs of pests are present in cage
3. If food grinding is observed, the cage may need to be changed more often.
  - a. Report cases of food grinding to the area PAT and/or Facility Supervisor.
4. Replace defective or broken parts (e.g. bent corner of cage, cracked feeder, etc.) on a cage immediately.

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

REVISION HISTORY			
REVISION NUMBER	AUTHOR(S)	EFFECTIVE DATE	REVISION(S)

## Appendix A

*This list is non-inclusive and other health concerns may arise. If unsure, always contact vet staff.*

### Emergency Health Concerns

- Hunched posture & scruffy (ruffled) fur: With no/low activity level
- Moribundity: Near death
- Breathing problems: Exaggerated,
- Increased or decreased breathing
- Paralysis: Complete loss of use of one or more limbs
- Dystocia: Problems or difficulty giving birth
- Seizure: May lay on side and paddle or rhythmically move limbs
- Severe wounds: Large or deep open wounds
- Masses or swelling: Anywhere on the body, with open wounds
- Prolapse (uterine, vaginal, rectal and penile): Tissue that is normally held within the body is hanging outside of the body
- Damage/Loss of Implant: Implants may be found anywhere on the body, but are commonly on the head

### Non-Emergency Health Concerns

- Low Body Condition/Thin Body
- Hunched posture & scruffy (ruffled) fur: With normal activity level
- Malocclusion: Misaligned or overgrown teeth
- Dermatitis: Inflamed/irritated skin or skin lesions
- Fighting/Minor fight wounds: animals observed fighting and/or pinpoint lesions on the rump and/or tail (animals will be separated immediately)
- Necrotic tail or digits: Tail or digits (fingers/toes) appear discolored
- Masses or swelling: Anywhere on the body, with no open wounds
- Microphthalmia/Anophthalmia: Small/absent eye
- Eye conditions: Swelling, discharge, discoloration, or bulging
- Gait/Locomotion: Problems moving around normally, staggering, or limping
- Head tilt: Head is tilted to one side and/or animal is rolling or circling
- Hydrocephalus: Domed or swollen head
- Abnormal skin color: yellow, blue or pale

## Appendix B

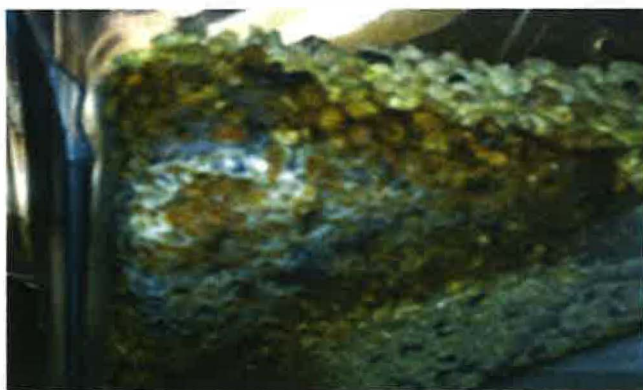
### Spot Change Criteria

*Change the cage if any of the following are observed.*

- Flooded cage (e.g. water leaking from source soaking the bedding)
- No dry rest area present in the bedding



- Bedding discoloration (mold, urine scale present)



- All 4 corners of the cage bottom are wet  
**Note:** If two (2) wet corners are observed, pull the cage out and observe the back of the cage to determine if a cage change is necessary.
- Wetness from one (1) corner connects to another corner  
**Note:** If two (2) wet corners are observed, pull the cage out of the spot on the rack and look at the bottom to determine if the wet spots are touching.



- Top bedding layer contains 50% or more feces



- Condensation is present on the sides of the cage or lid



- Signs of pests are present in cage



- Animals are observed with a poorly groomed and/or wet hair coat and are otherwise healthy

