

NONHUMAN PRIMATES

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The following is a selection of frequently asked questions (and their respective answers) concerning the *CCAC guidelines: Nonhuman primates* (CCAC, 2019).

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1. Why are standards for cage dimensions not provided?

Previous CCAC guidance on nonhuman primates did list minimum cage sizes; however, it is now acknowledged that determining the appropriate cage size to provide for the physical, psychological, and behavioural well-being of a nonhuman primate cannot be based solely on the body weight of the animal (see Section 2.2.1, “Spatial Requirements”). Consideration must also be given to factors such as the species, size, age, and health status of the animals; and the complexity of the cage environment. Therefore, this guidelines document addresses cage size requirements in terms of performance standards, and provides an assessment tool (see Appendix 1, “Nonhuman Primate Housing System Assessment Tool”) to assist with rating behaviours and elements that must be evaluated when determining the appropriate cage size.

2. Must all institutions use the assessment tool in Appendix 1 of the guidelines document to evaluate cage size?

Each institution may develop its own methods to evaluate the suitability of cages for the animals being housed; however, the elements listed in Appendix 1, “Nonhuman Primate Housing System Assessment Tool”, must be addressed.

3. What is meant by cages allowing nonhuman primates to exercise on an on-going basis?

Section 6.5, “Physical Activity”, states that “[c]ages should be of a sufficient size to allow exercise on an ongoing basis”. This relates to the fact that the nonhuman primates’ home cage should provide sufficient space, both horizontally and vertically, to allow the animals to express their normal locomotory behaviours, as explained in Section 2.2.1, “Spatial Requirements”. If the nonhuman primates need to be held in a more restricted housing environment for an extended period of time (for scientific purposes as approved by the animal care committee), then the opportunity for the full expression of normal locomotory behaviour (for example in a play cage) should be provided. Evaluation of the housing system used (see Appendix 1, “Nonhuman Primate Housing System Assessment Tool”) should provide an indication of the suitability of the housing system for meeting the welfare needs of the particular animals.

4. Why are the requirements for procurement of nonhuman primates more detailed than for other animals acquired for scientific studies?

The source of nonhuman primates is often at a greater distance from the institution than for other species, and typically in a different country with different standards for animal care. It is therefore important for institutions to be aware of the conditions under which the animals have been bred, housed, and transported, and to ensure they are favourable for both the welfare of the animals and the quality of the studies the animals will be involved in.

5. Do the guidelines allow procurement of wild-caught nonhuman primates for scientific studies?

Wild caught nonhuman primates are only permitted in exceptional circumstances where there are no alternatives. The guidelines state that nonhuman primates “should be captive-bred and preferably of the second filial generation [...]. or a subsequent generation.” “Should” means an obligation for which any

exceptions need to be justified to the animal care committee. The guidelines expressly point out that cost must not be a factor in the decision. The guidelines therefore impose strong restrictions on the procurement of wild-caught nonhuman primates, which can only be met on a case-by-case basis where there is scientific justification. This is in line with other standard-setting organizations such as the NC3Rs (see [NC3Rs Guidelines: Non-human primate accommodation, care and use](#) (NC3Rs, 2017), section 1.2.1).

6. What do the terms isolation, quarantine, and acclimation mean in terms of procurement?

Isolation occurs prior to transport of the animals to ensure the animals are fit for transport and for the intended studies, and all applicable regulations are met. The time required depends on prior husbandry and management practices, the health status of the colony, diseases endemic in the place of origin, the needs of the importer, and relevant regulations.

Quarantine is conducted upon arrival of animals at an institution, to assess their health and to protect other animals at the facility from the potential introduction of contagious diseases. The duration of quarantine and the specific procedures depend on the source of the animals, the type and length of transport, and the requirements of applicable permits.

Acclimation is intended to provide the animals with an opportunity to adjust to a new environment, food, routine, etc., prior to initiation of a study; the time required will depend on the particular animals and their experiences and the requirements of the study.

7. Is social housing of nonhuman primates always appropriate?

Guideline 10 states: “All animals of social species should be pair or group housed in conditions that allow full contact with compatible animals.” Social housing is therefore considered the “default”, and any other situations would need to be justified to the animal care committee, with details of the duration of the single housing period and proposed measures for meeting the social requirements of the animals. Where medical or behavioural needs of the animals or the objectives of a particular study require that an animal be singly housed, the animal should be provided with some degree of social contact whenever possible (e.g., visual, olfactory, and/or auditory contact with conspecifics, or increased contact time with people as appropriate) and returned to social housing as soon as practical.

8. What safeguards are in place to address the welfare of nonhuman primates that will undergo multiple procedures during their lifetime and/or be involved in more than one study?

Welfare assessment should be performed throughout an animal’s life and assess the lifetime experiences of the animal, taking into account physical condition, psychological and behavioural well-being, environment, and experimental procedures. The assessment should inform any mitigation strategies that might be necessary to improve an animal’s well-being and be used to determine whether an animal is appropriate for a particular study. When an animal is on a study, pre-determined endpoints will be used to signal when mitigation measures must be applied to address any pain or distress, or when the animal must be removed from the project.

9. Can nonhuman primates be moved to a retirement facility when they are no longer involved in scientific studies?

Transfer of nonhuman primates to a retirement facility must be considered on a case-by-case basis and be based on the welfare of each individual animal. Factors to be taken into account include the animal's age, health, previous experience, and the conditions under which the animal will be kept. There must be assurance that any proposed retirement facility is financially secure and able to properly care for the animal throughout its lifespan, and that there will be a compatible conspecific. The facilities should meet these guidelines, and for imported animals, Canadian Food Inspection Agency requirements must be met. See Section 11.2.2, "Relocation to a Retirement Facility", for more information on this topic.