

Standard Operating Procedures

SOP Number: **02-18-4501**
Service: **Research**
Operating Section: **Husbandry**
Unit: **CMF**
Title: **Maintenance of Rabbit Breeding Colonies**


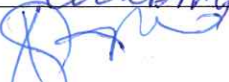
Purpose:

To outline special husbandry procedures for rabbit breeding colonies.

Procedure:

- 1) The gestation period for rabbits is 30-35 days with an average of 32 days.
- 2) A nest box (with Aspen or equivalent bedding) should be put in the cage between 25-27 days gestation. This allows the doe time to prepare the nest for her young.
- 3) Because these animals are very sensitive, loud noises and sudden movements are avoided in the room. All caging will be prepared (filling pans, setting up racks, etc.) in a separate location.
- 4) Nest boxes will be handled with gloves. Once the doe pulls fur to build a nest the nest box should not be changed unless it becomes soiled. If nest box needs to be changed, some of the doe's fur should be salvaged from the old box (using gloves and changing gloves between rabbits).
- 5) Nest box and cage must be checked thoroughly twice daily for litters, watching carefully for signs that the mother is preparing to give birth. If she starts building a nest outside of the nest box, place nest box in that location and transfer the nest into it (use gloves.)
- 6) Cages are changed right before parturition so the rabbits won't need to be disturbed for approximately one week after the birth of the litter. Place nest boxes in the same location in the new cage.
- 7) Once a litter is born, nest boxes should not be changed unless absolutely necessary until the young are fully haired (again, use gloves and try to salvage some of the fur). Remember to change gloves between rabbits.
- 8) Newborns should not be handled until they are fully haired unless one is found outside the nest box. (Use gloves when handling).
- 9) Litter should be checked daily (without touching the young) to make sure the doe is taking care of them and feeding them (they appear to be putting on weight).
- 10) The dam is removed from the kits at 10 weeks.
- 11) The kits are separated by sex at 3 months.

APPROVALS

Responsible Official Signature	Date
	5/19/19
QA Signature	Date
	05/09/2019

Version #3	Effective Date	Supersedes #2	Original Date 11/09/99
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