

## **WVU IACUC STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE: Prevention and Management of Fighting (Aggression) in Mice**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe a systematic method to separate mice when they are fighting while attempting to keep as many animals as possible socially housed.

### **Fighting prevention**

1. Animals that have been group-housed without incident may begin fighting for unknown reasons. Measures to eliminate aggression/fighting will include attempts to preserve group housing if possible.
2. Males that arrive together at WVU or that have been raised together may be compatible. As a general rule, weaned males should only be group-housed with their littermates. However, the mice of some strains are known to become incompatible once they reach breeding age.
3. Unfamiliar reproductive males will often fight with each other and should not be combined.
4. It is strongly recommended to avoid returning males removed for breeding to any group of males, even their original groups, as they tend to fight e.g. single house males once they have been mated.
5. Some strains are less conducive to group housing than others. In these strains, social housing of reproductive age males may not be possible and they will have to be individually caged.

### **Intervention**

1. If previously-compatible group housed mice begin fighting and become wounded, they may remain in their cage and be treated, or removed depending upon the severity of the wound(s).
2. If the “aggressor” mouse (or mice) can be identified (typically the one(s) with no wounds), it/they may be moved to another cage and singly-housed so that the rest of the mice can remain group-housed.
3. On rare occasions males may be aggressive to females or vice versa. Also, intra-group fighting among females can occur. These should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and may result in the separation of some mice. Every effort will be taken to keep mice group-housed.