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Recommended stocking densities for juvenile small animals kept in a pet retail environment

Background:

In line with a decision made by PIJAC Canada's National Board of Directors, the association was asked to prepare a set of recommended stocking densities for pets kept in a pet retail environment. This document represents the third segment of the exercise and refers to small animals.

The following draft is the result of some extensive research. Before its completion, it is expected that this document will be subject to additional consultation. At this point in its development, the document reflects the expertise identified and selected by the staff of PIJAC Canada. Through our involvement with the **International Pet Advisory Council** we were able to review pertinent documents referred by other pet industry associations around the world, including the State of Colorado's published Animal Care Facilities guidelines, the Pet Care Trust and Guidelines from Waverly, Great Britain.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been taken into account in establishing the recommendations appearing in this document:

1. Definition of Pet retail environment. "Pet retail environment" means any place or premise used in whole or in part, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, for the purpose of retail sale, trading, bartering, or otherwise transferring pet animals to the public.

In addition to the traditional pet shop or wholesaler, pet retail environments shall include the keeping for transfer or the transfer of pet animals at temporary facilities such as flea markets, mobile facilities, department stores, merchandise outlets, discount outlets, pet animal shows conducting a sale, and other types of retail outlets.

2. Notwithstanding the other assumptions, it is understood that while this document specifically refers to stocking densities, it is assumed that all other pertinent animal welfare considerations, as outlined in other PIJAC Canada publications, are being met. More specifically this means:

- Primary enclosures are those animal enclosures in which the animal normally rests or sleeps (also referred to as housing).

- Primary enclosures shall be structurally sound and maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain them. Primary enclosures shall be constructed such that they can be routinely maintained to allow animals to stay dry and clean (as appropriate for the species) and to provide convenient access to clean food and water. The floor of the primary enclosure shall be constructed to prevent injury to the animals' feet and legs. All the surfaces of the primary enclosure must be constructed of a material that is water resistant and can be cleaned and sanitized. All primary enclosures shall allow each pet animal to turn around, exercise normal postural movements, and to experience necessary socialization with cage mates.
- Display cases may be utilized as primary enclosures during the workday; however, animals should not be kept in display cases overnight unless the display case also meets the requirements of and functions as a primary enclosure.
- Display cases must be constructed of a material that is water resistant and can be cleaned and sanitized. Display cases must be well constructed and kept in good repair. The area around the display case must be well ventilated to prevent odor buildup. Display cases for small animals shall be maintained in good repair and constructed of non-toxic metal or other water resistant material, which can be cleaned and sanitized.

In light of these assumptions, PIJAC Canada recommends the following as suggested cage stocking densities for small animals kept in a pet retail environment.

General considerations: Minimum Space Requirements

- (a) The housing must be large enough to provide full body extension without contact with the confines and must be wide enough in at least one direction to accommodate the animal to turn around freely.
- (b) Sufficient food should be available at all times and water should be fresh daily. Food and water containers should be placed to avoid fecal contamination.
- (c) Minimum space requirements for multiple small animals housed temporarily depend on the calculated Housing Density Factor and the overall length of the small animal. Additional small animals are added as space allows based on the formula.

The following calculation will be used to determine the number of small animals that could be housed in a given enclosure:

$$A + B = C$$

- Where **A = 1**, (represents the calculation of the first small animal's space requirements (see Density Factor Chart)). * **If this is less than one (1), this means this cage is not suitable for this type of small animal.**
- where **B** is the calculation of how many additional small animals may be suitably added,
- where **C** is equal to the total small animals suggested for that particular space.

Calculation of A:

$$(\text{cage base size in sq. cm.}) - (\text{single small animal need})$$

$$\text{Where the answer is } > 0^* \quad A = 1$$

Calculation of B:

$$\frac{(\text{cage base size in sq. cm.}) - (\text{single small animal need})}{(\text{additional small animal needs})} = B \text{ (rounded down)}$$

Calculation of C: $A + B = C$

Example: What is the suggested maximum number of hamsters in a 1710 sq. cm. cage?

$$A = (1710 \text{ sq. cm.}) - (1 \text{st hamster @ } 400 \text{ sq.cm.})$$

Where the answer is $> 0^*$

$$A = 1$$

$$B = \frac{(1710 - 400)}{\text{Additional hamsters needs @ } 75 \text{ sq. cm.}}$$

$$B = 17.4, \text{ rounded down to } 17$$

$$C = 18$$

Stocking densities are calculated on the actual base floor space and represent the maximum number of small animals recommended per cage, regardless of multi-levels or attachments to the outside of the cage.

Outdoor Pens. The size, shape, and design of the cages shall be appropriate for the species being housed and shall allow space, without overcrowding, for the normal exercise requirements of each small animal. Cages shall be constructed to prevent injury to small animals. A covered portion of each cage shall be provided where small animals can avoid direct sunlight or adverse weather conditions and commingling with non-captive animals.

Density Factor Chart

Small animal species (juveniles)	Single small animal needs (sq. cm.)	Additional small Animal needs (sq. cm.)	Height (cm.)
mice & dwarf hamsters	400	50	20
hamsters & gerbils	400	100	20
rats & degus	500	150	20
hedgehogs	800	300	25
ferrets & chinchillas	1500	650	35
	1-3 small animal needs	Additional small Animal needs	Height
guinea pigs	1500	450	25
< 750g	2400	800*	
>750g			
	1-2 small animal needs	Additional small Animal needs	Height
rabbits	2400	900	35
<1.5 kg			
1.5 to 2.5	3000	2000	35
kg			
>2.5 kg	5000	*note	40

* note- small animals at this size may have to be separated due to aggression and/or mating issues.