Topics include:

- Social Housing
- Disaster Preparedness
Social species: any species known to naturally live and interact with conspecifics (animals of the same species).

Rodents are social species; therefore the default housing for rodents in the animal facility is social housing.

Social housing is defined as housing in compatible pairs or groups.
The Eighth Edition of the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* has put a greater emphasis on the housing requirements for social species.

By accepting PHS funding, our institution has agreed to abide by the guidelines set in the *Guide*.
The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) has a position statement on social housing of animals as the default unless justified. Examples of justification include:

- **Social incompatibility**: some strains are known for fighting (especially among males). Animals exhibiting signs of fighting will be separated. Alternative social configurations might be tried in instances of social incompatibility.

- **Veterinary concerns**: Animals exhibiting illness or disease might be separated for health concerns. Veterinary concerns must involve the input of the veterinarians.

- **Scientific necessity**: Experimental design may necessitate the need for single housing. These instances need to be documented in the approved Animal Activity Protocol. **Question #12b** in the Protocol form addresses single housing. (Examples on next slide.)

Additional enrichment such as nylabones, huts, etc. should be offered to singly housed animals when possible.

Single housing should be limited to the minimum period necessary.
All occurrences of single housing should be documented in the Protocol form (Question #12b).

The committee might have questions that you will be asked to consider. For example:

• Telemetry studies: Could an un-instrumented cage mate be housed with the instrumented animal?
• Externalized catheters: Is there a way to protect the catheter to allow for social housing?
• Post-operative: PI’s have reported good results with housing pairs together immediately post-operatively. Surgical animals reportedly recover quicker than singly housed animals.
Animal welfare within the designs of the studies should be our top priority. Single or solitary housing can be extremely distressful for social animals.

The distress from single housing could have potential consequences to the validity of data. Single housing of social species should be considered a possible cause of “more than momentary distress” and addressed when conducting the search for alternatives.

In cases where the animal’s weight excludes him from social housing due to cage size, an exemption can be written into the protocol to allow the animal to be housed with a cage mate. The benefits from social housing may outweigh the requirement for cage size.
The Laboratory Animal Facilities and the IACUC, in conjunction with the University’s overarching Disaster Plan, has a disaster plan in place.

Facility specific disasters, such as failure of HVAC system or flooding, will be handled at the LAF level. Animals may be relocated to another part of the facility or provided additional support during the incident. Procedures are coordinated and carried out by the LAF.

Institutional level disasters are coordinated at a higher level. Human safety is top priority during a disaster and access to building or the campus might be limited. In extreme disasters, animals will not be allowed to suffer and when appropriate will be euthanatized.

All investigators are asked to consider any animals that are irreplaceable, i.e. a strain that you have created and do not exist elsewhere. If you have irreplaceable animals, consider ways to ensure their survival in a disaster:
• Cryopreservation of embryos
• Sharing animals with a colleague/collaborator at another institution

We hope that the disaster plan will never need to be enacted, however we must be prepared.