

Introduction



Vivarium
NIH Design Policy and Guidelines

The NIH Vivarium Design Policy and Guidelines describes in general and specific terms the minimum requirements for the planning and design of facilities that house animals and related functions.

A.1 Mission Statement

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the principal biomedical research agency of the Federal Government. The NIH conducts, supports, and promotes research to improve the health of the American people. The NIH's mission is to increase the understanding of the processes that underlie human health, disability, and disease; to advance knowledge concerning the health effects of interactions between humans and the environment; to develop methods of predicting, detecting, diagnosing, and treating disease; and to distribute research results for critical review and ultimately for medical application.

Considerable animal research is conducted at the NIH. *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (The Guide)* covers all aspects of the care and use of laboratory animals, including institutional policies for monitoring animals and providing care. In the U.S., research facilities requiring the use of animals must conform to *The Guide* to be accredited by the American Association for Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC). Thus, the NIH's animal facilities must be state-of-the-art and meet AAALAC accreditation requirements. The environment within them must provide for the health, safety, and comfort of the staff and the animals. Plans for building and renovations of animal facilities must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Animal Care and Use (OACU). Animals are not allowed to be housed in laboratories. Laboratories using experimental animals should be located adjacent to animal facilities whenever possible.

Activities primarily performed in a vivarium include providing animal care of a maintenance and preventive nature, animal breeding for genetics studies, animal experimentation involving administration of drugs, chemicals, and biological agents, routine pathology, surgical procedures, and record keeping of a highly detailed nature. Much of the daily routine is occupied with animal care duties such as preparing food, changing animal bedding, washing cages and room surfaces, inspecting animals for illness, and disposing of waste. Various procedures, protocols, and experiments are also conducted in the vivarium. In addition to these activities, vivarium administrative support functions are also located within the vivarium.



A.2 User Input

The ultimate users, especially the researchers and veterinarians, must be consulted in addition to the OACU during the development of Programs of Requirements and the design phases to truly meet the needs of the NIH. Users' input will be incorporated wherever possible and applicable in the project.

