

FLSC Standard Operating Procedure for Fostering Mouse Pups

Purpose

There are occasions that require fostering a valuable litter on an alternate nursing dam. These will be indicated by notation on the cage card for weekend staff. The most common circumstances for fostering pups include dystocia, maternal death, or poor maternal instincts. These problems can be attributed to a multitude of factors ranging from strain related phenotype, age of the dam, or even disruption of routine due to construction.

Procedure

1. Select a nursing female with a litter of the same approximate age (within 2 days plus or minus) or selected/purchased females with litters of a different strain. The purchased strains used for fostering are often a hardier outbred strain or of a different coat color from the fostered strain to easily identify the pups.
2. The total number of pups added to a litter should not exceed the number of nursing pups in the original litter by more than two.
3. Pups from the original litter are removed and euthanized to make room for the new foster animals. In the case of different coat color, there is an option of only euthanizing a portion of the foster dam's pups.
4. Foster animals may be cold to the touch in the case of maternal death. These should be warmed in the hands before introducing them to the foster cage.
5. The added foster pups should be mixed in with any original remaining pups only if the litters are of differing coat color. If the foster pups are the same coat color as the original litter, the original litter must be removed and euthanized.
6. To increase the acceptance of the new pups, the foster mother should be scruffed to induce her to urinate on the litter. This will place her scent on the pups.
7. The cage may be placed on a heat source temporarily to provide warmth for any chilled animals and to allow observations. Ideally the dam will accept the fostered pups and immediately begin to clean and nurse them.
8. These litters should be observed closely for rejection and cannibalism.
9. The information for the fostered pups should be placed with the dam's cage for reference at weaning.