**Part H – Domestic Small Rodents** ‘Domestic small rodents means hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, chinchillas, degus’.

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| **Condition** | **Guidance** | **Condition met** **YES / NO** | **Officers Notes**  |
| **5.0 Suitable Environment**  |  Businesses must prevent the risk of injury, illness and escape. |  |  |
|  |  If wire cages are used, bars must be narrow enough to avoid the risk of escape.  |  |  |
|  |  Slatted, grid or wire mesh floors are not to be used in small animal housing. Chinchillas can be housed in cages with wire mesh floors if there are areas of alternative flooring such as solid wood.  |  |  |
|  |  See the minimum enclosure sizes that must be followed. |  |  |
| **Environmental conditions, including sizes**  |  Every animal must be able to lie fully outstretched, turn around unimpeded, stand fully upright without touching the cage roof, hide, dig, run and play.  |  |  |
|   |  Sleeping areas need to be dry, draught-free, well ventilated and clean as well as large enough to allow all the small rodents housed to rest together fully outstretched, turn around unimpeded and move around comfortably.  |  |  |
| **Bedding and substrate**  |  Small rodents must be provided with suitable nesting material in sufficient amounts. The type used will depend on the animal kept; see list below. Small rodents must not be given nesting materials which can separate into thin strands, e.g. cotton wool.  Suitable nesting materials for small rodents include, but are not limited to:* Hamsters - hay, wood wool, shredded paper or cardboard.
* Rats and mice - hay, shredded paper, paper strips and paper tissues.
* Gerbils - ink-free cardboard (e.g. empty toilet rolls, egg boxes, plain cardboard boxes) or paper and hay.
* Chinchillas and degus must be provided with constant access to a nest box filled with hay.
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|  |  Any hay, nesting materials and substrates provided must be good quality and dust free.  |  |  |
|   |  Small rodents must be provided with a suitable litter and substrate in sufficient amounts. There are a number of different litters available and the type will depend on the animal kept. Suitable materials include but are not limited to: * Hamsters - dust-free wood shavings or granulated corn-cob
* Rats and mice - non-aspen woodchips, cellulose based chips or shredded paper
* Gerbils - peat-free compost or rough-grained woodchip or hay mix.
* Chinchillas - shredded paper, dust-free wood shavings and hay.
* Degus - dust-free wood shavings and hay.
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|  |  Small rodents must be provided with constant access to places to hide, in addition to their sleeping area. As a minimum each hiding place needs to be large enough to allow one individual to rest alone. |  |  |
| **Temperature** |  Temperatures must be appropriate to species specific or life stage consideration. In general ambient temperatures must not go below 12°C or exceed 26°C. This may be provided with nesting material.  |  |  |
|  |  High temperatures above 18°C can be detrimental to chinchillas and extra checks and precautions must be made on these in very hot weather  |  |  |
|  |  Providing sufficient nesting material can help achieve these temperatures.  |  |  |
| **Handling and transport** |  Small rodents must be transported in suitable carriers and must not be mixed with unfamiliar animals (in the same carrier). They must be transported with their companion small rodents, where applicable, and the carrier is to be of an appropriate size so that it is not overcrowded.  |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Providing a Suitable Environment for Small Rodents**  |  See the minimum enclosure sizes that must be followed. Light-reducing shelters for rats, mice and hamsters (such as, but not limited to, a box or red tinted acrylic) must be provided. However, these must be monitored daily for signs of chewing and removed or replaced as necessary. Small rodents must be provided with a choice of different nesting materials. |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Cleaning Small Rodents’ Environment** |  After cleaning, some used unsoiled litter and nesting material must be transferred back to help keep scents familiar for the rodents. |  |  |
| **Optional Higher Standards for Providing a Suitable Environment for Small Rodents**  |  Small rodents that are physically able to use platforms must be provided with access to a platform (singly housed) or multiple platforms. Animals must be able to access these easily and be able to sit (ideally stand) up on it fully without touching the cage roof. |  |  |
| **Optional Higher Standards for Small Rodents’ Light** |  When work is occurring near, or nocturnal animals are checked at night, dim red light or dim white light must be used to minimise disturbance. Light level must be sufficient enough for observing or undertaking required tasks. |  |  |
| **6.0 Suitable Diet**  |  |  |  |
| **Diet** |  All small rodents must be fed a suitable diet that is available to them at all times. |  |  |
|  |  Chinchillas and degus must have constant access to good quality dust-free hay. |  |  |
|  |  All small rodents must be fully weaned on admission. |  |  |
| **Monitoring** |  If there is no improvement in poor intake or not eating within 12 hours or the condition of the individual deteriorates, a veterinarian must be consulted.  |  |  |
|  |  A veterinarian must be consulted if a small mammal shows signs of ill health. |  |  |
| **Water** |  Water must be provided in a bottle or automatic water systems and located away from the sleeping area to help prevent this becoming damp or waterlogged if the bottle leaks.  |  |  |
| **7.0 Monitoring of behaviour and training of animals**  |  |  |  |
| **Enrichment** |  Suitable enrichment items include, but are not limited to, tunnels, paper bags filled with hay, willow sticks/balls and branches from non-toxic, untreated fruit trees (for example apple). Opportunities for gnawing should always be available. |  |  |
|  |  Chinchillas and Degus must be given the opportunity to use a sand bath by offering one on a regular basis, for example 10 minutes daily. This should not be permanently available.  |  |  |
|  |  Small mammals must not be given enrichment made of rubber, due to the risk of ingestion leading to intestinal blockages if chewed and swallowed.  |  |  |
| **8.0 Animal Handling and Interactions**  |  |  |  |
| **Handling**  |  Small rodents must not be picked up by the scruff of their necks, ears or unsupported by the tail, nor must they be placed on their backs in positions of tonic immobility. Picking small mammals up unsupported by the tail can result in their tail breaking or the skin sloughing off (degloving). Additionally, if chinchillas are handled roughly they may shed some of their fur. |  |  |
| **Interactions**  |  All small rodents must be housed in single sex groups unless a solitary species (or sold or used for breeding).  |  |  |
|  |  Small rodents must only be housed with other rodents of the same species.  |  |  |
| **Required Higher Standards for Handling and Interactions with Small Rodents** |  Where social species of small rodents have to be housed singly they must be provided with extra sources of enrichment. A plan must be in place for singly housed small rodents (only those of a social species).  |  |  |
| **9.0 Protection from Pain, Suffering, Injury and Disease**  |  |  |  |
| **Checking**  |  The front teeth and nails of every small rodent must be checked monthly, unless inappropriate at the stage of the breeding cycle, to ensure they are not overgrown or misaligned - only a veterinarian may correct overgrown or misaligned teeth. They should have a pre-mating check and then a check at weaning time. |  |  |

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| **Higher standards (Required) Domestic Small Rodents**  | Standards Met Yes/No |
| See the minimum enclosure sizes that must be followed. |  |
| Light-reducing shelters for rats, mice and hamsters (such as, but not limited to, a box or red tinted acrylic) must be provided. However, these must be monitored daily for signs of chewing and removed or replaced as necessary. |  |
| Small rodents must be provided with a choice of different nesting materials. |  |
| After cleaning, some used unsoiled litter and nesting material must be transferred back to help keep scents familiar for the rodents. |  |
| Where social species of small rodents have to be housed singly they must be provided with extra sources of enrichment. A plan must be in place for singly housed small rodents (only those of a social species). |  |
| **Higher Standards (Optional)** 50% required | Standards met Yes/No  |
| Small rodents that are physically able to use platforms must be provided with access to a platform (singly housed) or multiple platforms. Animals must be able to access these easily and be able to sit (ideally stand) up on it fully without touching the cage roof. |  |
| When work is occurring near, or nocturnal animals are checked at night, dim red light or dim white light must be used to minimise disturbance. Light level must be sufficient enough for observing or undertaking required tasks. |  |