Guideline for Standby Breeding

Purpose: Maintain a minimal, genetically viable breeding colony during periods of low demand, while reducing overproduction and supporting ethical standards.

Procedure:

Breeding Colony Management

- Maintain up to 2 cages with breeding pairs (or trios) per strain.
- Males and females are housed together from 12 weeks of age.
- Replace breeding animals when:
  - They reach 26 weeks of age, or
  - No signs of pregnancy or no litter produced within 6 weeks.

Young Animals for Backup

- Retention Criteria:
  - Only keep pups from litters that are:
    - Minimum 6 pups
    - With a roughly equal distribution of males and females.
  - Discard surplus animals at weaning (~3 weeks) unless reserved for genotyping.
- Cage Setup & Rotation:
  - Keep 1 cage of males and 1 cage of females, aged 6–12 weeks.
  - At 10 weeks of age, plan to introduce new backup animals.
  - Euthanize the oldest animals when:
    - New backup animals are introduced, or
    - Youngest backups reach 6 weeks, or genotyping results confirm target genotype.

Cage Capacity

- A maximum of two breeding cages.
- A minimum of two and a maximum of four cages with young animals for backup.

Duration and Cryopreservation

- To ensure long-term sustainability and responsible colony management, standby breeding for any given line should not exceed 6 months.
- After this period, one of the following actions needs to be taken:
  - Resume active breeding, if there is a clear and documented research need.
  - Cryopreserve the line (via sperm or embryo freezing) to retain the genetic material without continued live colony maintenance.