

Value Stream Mapping of Mouse Cage Production

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Historically, the staff working in cage wash at the University of Houston washed rodent cage components and stored the components on the clean side of cage wash. The rodent husbandry staff assembled the cage components before they were transported to the animal rooms on bulk carts. Dirty cages were loaded on the same bulk carts and returned to the cage wash area to be washed. The process was performed repeatedly throughout the day. All components of the caging system and the bulk carts were washed in a rack washer. As the rodent population grew, the number of cages to be processed increased. This in turn increased the number of trips to and from cage wash and the number of times a day that a bulk cart needed to be washed. It soon became evident that despite the number of cages washed, prepared, and stored on clean side, the limiting factor for this process was the amount of rack washer time needed per day to process clean bulk carts. The purchase of more bulk carts would not eliminate this problem, but actually would have increased the amount of the rack washer time needed per day to process clean bulk carts.

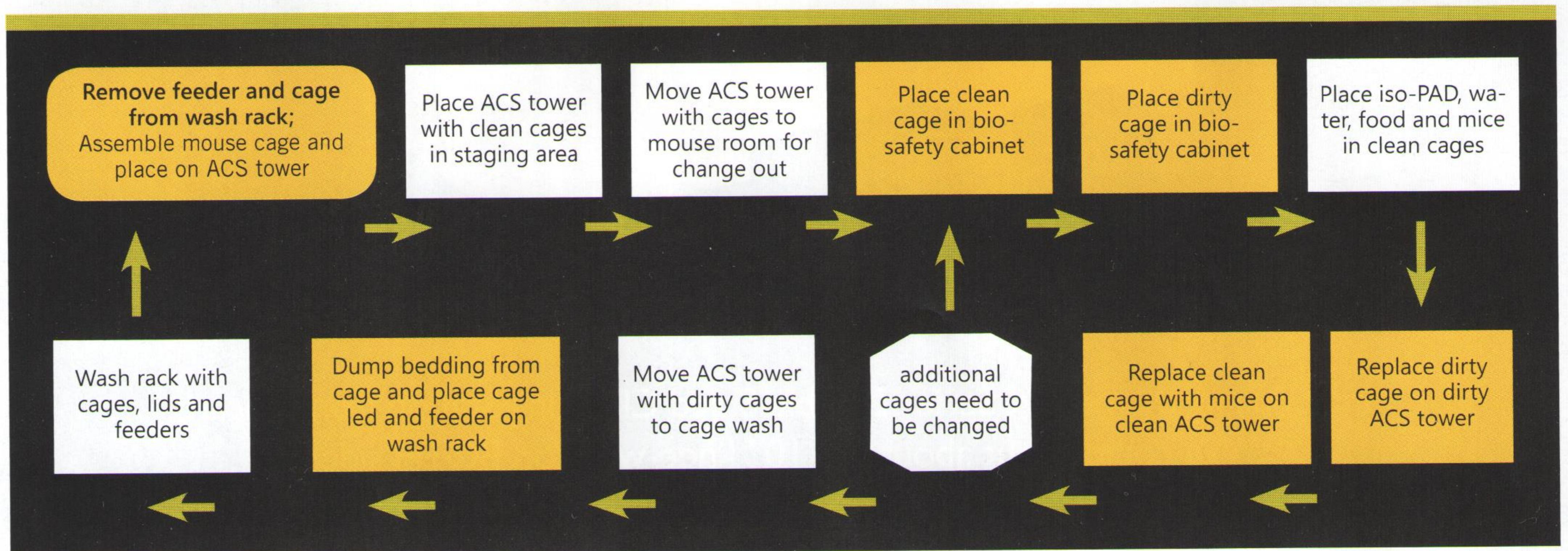


Figure 1. Value stream map demonstrating the steps needed from dirty cage dumping through lifespan of a mouse cage and ending with dirty cage dumping. The steps in which a cage is handled are highlighted in yellow. The cage is handled 6 times from clean side cage wash until its return to the dirty side cage wash.