

His lab associate, Jason Gilbert, will help to evaluate changes in the muscles of the mice. The researchers will measure atrophy two ways—first by weighing the muscles and second by looking at cross sections of the muscles to determine the size of individual muscle fibers.

“I wish I could go up there with the mice in space,” Gilbert says. “I joke that if something goes wrong, I’ll go up and fix it.”

Gilbert and Cadena hope the study will validate their mouse model and increase their understanding of the MuRF-1 protein. It might even accelerate the pace of drug discovery in the field. To complement the study, there will be a second mice in space mission in February.

Kenneth Shields, director of operations at CASIS, is excited about the September launch. “We have a lot riding on this mission,” he says. Among other things, CASIS wants to “validate the hardware”—new housing for the mice. The Animal Enclosure Module is intended for long stays in orbit and has sophisticated feeding and filtering systems. This should ensure the mice are kept comfortable and healthy while on board the ISS.

According to the latest YELP (and SQUEAK) reviews, this deluxe mouse hotel is out of this world!

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