

WATER AND FOOD RESTRICTION

Purpose/Scope

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to outline the policy regarding water or food restriction.

Definitions

Water restriction is defined as water deprivation for longer than 12 hours.

Food restriction (less than 80% ad libitum intake) is defined as food deprivation for longer than 24 hours for simple stomach animals, or longer than 48 hours for ruminants.

Policy/Procedure

1. Restriction for research purposes must be justified scientifically and a program established to monitor physiologic or behavioral parameters, including criteria for removal of the animal from the experiment (such as weight loss or hydration state).
2. When experimental situations require food or fluid restriction, at least minimum quantities of food and fluid should be available. Precautions that should be used in cases of fluid restriction to avoid dehydration include daily recording of fluid intake and recording of body weight at least three times per week – or more often for smaller animals, such as rodents. Special attention should be given to ensuring that animals consume a balanced diet, as food consumption may decrease with fluid restriction.
3. In the case of conditioned-response experiments, use of a highly preferred food or fluid as a positive reinforcement instead of restriction is recommended.
4. Protocols proposing water or food restriction may be approved by the IACUC if scientifically justified by the investigator. Each animal use protocol proposing the use of water or food restriction will be considered and reviewed by the IACUC on a case-by-case basis.