

## Title: Food and Fluid Restriction

Policy No.

**IACUC-011**

Effective Date:

**7/18/11**

Updated:

**08/11/2025**

### 1. Reference(s):

*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, NRC, 2011, pp. 30-31.

**2. Policy:** Regulation of food or fluid intake may be required for the conduct of some physiological, neuroscience, and behavioral research protocols. The regulation process may entail *scheduled access* to food or fluid sources, so an animal consumes as much as desired at regular intervals, or *restriction*, in which the total volume of food or fluid consumed is strictly monitored and controlled. The objective when these studies are being planned and executed should be to use the least restriction necessary to achieve the scientific objective while maintaining animal well-being.

The development of animal protocols that involve the use of food or fluid regulation requires the evaluation of three factors:

- 1) the necessary level of regulation
- 2) potential adverse consequences of regulation, and
- 3) methods for assessing the health and well-being of the animals

In addition, the following factors influence the amount of food or fluid restriction that can be safely used in a specific protocol: the species, strain, or stock, gender, and age of the animals; thermoregulatory demand; type of housing; time of feeding, nutritive value, and fiber content of the diet; and prior experimental manipulation. The degree of food or fluid restriction necessary for consistent behavioral performance is influenced by the difficulty of the task, the individual animal, the motivation required of the animal, and the effectiveness of animal training for a specific protocol-related task.

The animals should be closely monitored to ensure that food and fluid intake meets their nutritional needs. Body weights should be recorded at least weekly and more often for animals requiring greater restrictions. Written records should be maintained for each animal to document daily food and fluid consumption, hydration status, and any behavioral and clinical changes used as criteria for temporary or permanent removal of an animal from a protocol. In the case of conditioned-response research protocols, use of a highly preferred food or fluid as positive reinforcement, instead of restriction, is recommended.

This policy does not apply to caloric restriction as a husbandry technique and means of weight control or to temporary food or fluid restriction prior to anesthesia and/or surgery.