

IACUC Policy on the Physical Restraint of Animals

Physical restraint is the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal movement for the purpose of examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy, or experimental manipulation. Animals are restrained for brief periods, usually minutes, in many research applications.

Restraint devices should be suitable in size, design, and operation to minimize discomfort, pain, distress, and the potential for injury to the animal and the research staff. Dogs, nonhuman primates, and many other animals can be trained, through use of positive reinforcement techniques, to cooperate with research procedures or remain immobile for brief periods.

Prolonged restraint, including chairing of nonhuman primates, should be avoided unless it is essential for achieving research objectives and is specifically approved by the IACUC. Systems that do not limit an animal's ability to make normal postural adjustments (e.g., subcutaneous implantation of osmotic minipumps in rodents, backpack-fitted infusion pumps in dogs and nonhuman primates, and free-stall housing for farm animals) should be used when compatible with protocol objectives. Animals that do not adapt to necessary restraint systems should be removed from the study. When restraint devices are used, they should be specifically designed to accomplish research goals that are impossible or impractical to accomplish by other means or to prevent injury to animals or personnel.

The following are important guidelines for restraint:

1. Restraint devices should not be considered a normal method of housing, and must be justified in the animal use protocol.
2. Restraint devices should not be used simply as a convenience in handling or managing animals.
3. Alternatives to physical restraint should be considered.
4. The period of restraint should be the minimum required to accomplish the research objectives.
5. Animals to be placed in restraint devices should be given training (with positive reinforcement) to adapt to the equipment and personnel.
6. Animals that fail to adapt should be removed from the study.
7. Provision should be made for observation of the animal at appropriate intervals, as determined by the IACUC.
8. Veterinary care must be provided if lesions or illnesses associated with restraint are observed. The presence of lesions, illness, or severe behavioral change often necessitates the temporary or permanent removal of the animal from restraint.
9. The purpose of the restraint and its duration should be clearly explained to personnel involved with the study.