1. Purpose

This document provides guidance on physical animal restraint procedures.

1. Scope

This guideline applies to all people working directly with animals.

1. Definitions

Physical restraint – the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal’s normal movement for examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy, or experimental manipulation.

Restraint devices – objects or equipment used to facilitate the physical restraint of an animal.

Momentary restraint – restraint for up to 5 minutes.

Short-term restraint – restraint duration ranging from 5 – 60 minutes.

Prolonged restraint – restraint duration greater than 1 hour.

Training/Acclimation - animals undergo behavioral modification (training) sessions to elicit specific behaviors using various methods, including positive reinforcement (rewarding desired behaviors) to increase the probability of the behavior occurring again (conditioning). To minimize stress during training, procedures may be introduced gradually and repeatedly (acclimation/ habituation) or by combining an experimental/veterinary/husbandry procedure with a positive event (desensitization/counter-conditioning).

1. General Guidance

a. Use of restraint techniques and devices, including the purpose and duration of the restraint and training/acclimation plan for prolonged restraint-term must be justified in the IACUC-approved protocol. Alternatives to physical restraint must be considered.

b. The purpose and duration of restraint are to be explained to those personnel performing restraint.

c. Personnel performing restraint procedures must be adequately trained to perform the technique.

d. Animals should only be restrained for the minimum duration necessary to meet the research objectives.

e. Systems that minimize restriction, allowing the animal to make normal postural adjustments, are to be used whenever possible/available; the least restricting method should be used whenever possible. Commercial species-specific restraint systems should be used if available.

f. For repeated short-term restraint and prolonged restraint, training must be provided for animals to adapt to the equipment and personnel.

i. The objective of training/acclimation is to minimize distress associated with restraint procedures.

ii. Investigators should assess and document the animal’s response to restraint and acclimation procedures.

1. Animals that fail to adapt will be removed from the study.
2. Animals are to be continuously observed during restraint procedures unless justified in the approved IACUC protocol.
3. For prolonged restraint greater than 12 hours, animals must be provided daily opportunity for unrestrained activity for at least one continuous hour during the 12 hour restraint period, unless scientifically justified in the approved IACUC protocol.
4. References

ILAR Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th edition, 2011.

Animal Welfare Act and Animal Welfare Regulations, March 15, 2022