



Physical Restraint of Research Animals

Purpose: The ACUC evaluates all proposed animal activities for the potential to cause pain and distress in vertebrate animals. The ACUC must ensure alternatives to painful and distressful procedures are considered and when scientifically possible, pain and distress are eliminated or minimized. Physical restraint of research animals may cause pain or distress. The Florida State University (FSU) IACUC has adopted the following policy to establish minimally acceptable standards of physical restraint and to ensure consistency of review for animal use protocols including restraint procedures.

Definitions:

Physical restraint: is defined by *The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* as “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.”

Prolonged restraint: is defined by the FSU ACUC as physical restraint of a conscious animal for 30 minutes or longer in a normal postural position (sternal recumbency with limbs adducted) or 10 minutes or longer in an abnormal postural position (any position other than sternal recumbency with limbs adducted). Use of trapping devices for capture of wild animals is excluded from this definition provided traps are checked at a minimum of every 12 hours. For field studies, use of traps with check frequencies exceeding 12 hours is considered prolonged restraint.

Policy:

- The animal use protocol must include a description of the device, the duration of restraint, and justification for use.
- 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.
- Restraint devices should not be considered a normal method of housing.
- Restraint devices should not be used simply as a convenience in handling or managing animals.
- Alternative to physical restraint should be considered.
- The period of restraint should be the minimum required to accomplish the research objectives.
- Animals to be placed in restraint devices should be given training, with positive reinforcement, to adapt to the equipment and personnel.
- Animals that fail to adapt should be removed from the study.
- Provision should be made for observation of the animal at appropriate intervals, as determined by the ACUC.
- 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
- The purpose of the restraint and its duration should be clearly explained to personnel involved with the study.

- During protocol review, the ACUC may categorize other episodes of restraint as prolonged depending on the type, length, and frequency of restraint.

Reference:

Institute for Laboratory Animal Research. 2011. Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals, 8th ed. Washington (DC): National Academies Press.

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