



Position Statement

Physical Restraint of Research Animals

The American Veterinary Medical Association defines physical restraint as the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal voluntary movement for the purposes of examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy, or manipulation.

Physical restraint of animals may be done for experimental purposes, for husbandry or veterinary medical purposes, or to ensure personnel safety. As restraint may induce physiological and behavioral changes, the method of restraint should be chosen to minimize distress to the animal. The restraint device should be designed to ensure the safety of the animal and it should be appropriately maintained. Alternatives to restraint (e.g., operant conditioning/training to a procedure) should be considered.

Prolonged restraint should be avoided, unless it is scientifically justified and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Although there is not a precise definition for prolonged restraint across species, as the duration of restraint increases, a concomitant increase in attention should be directed to alternatives to restraint, the health and well-being of the animal, and endpoint criteria for the restraint.

Habituation (acclimation) of the animal to the restraint device should be considered when the animal may be repeatedly restrained over the course of a study or medical treatment, or restrained for an extended period of time.

The IACUC should establish policies describing appropriate restraint procedures, the duration of restraint, and frequency of monitoring. When an approved duration must be exceeded, veterinary oversight should occur. Observation of the animal during restraint is critical; the frequency and method of observation of animals during restraint will depend on the specific circumstance. But, monitoring should be sufficiently frequent to ensure the welfare of the animals during the restraint period. Criteria should also be developed for the temporary or permanent removal of an animal from a study involving restraint if the animal is not adapting well, based on physical or behavioral abnormalities, to the restraint device, or acquires behavioral abnormalities over time.

Regulatory requirements pertaining to prolonged restraint must be adhered to.

References:

American Veterinary Medical Association,
http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/animal_welfare/physical_restraint.asp
USDA Animal Welfare Regulations, http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/awr.shtml
Guidelines for the Care and Use of Mammals in Neuroscience and Behavioral Research (NRC 2003),
http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10732
Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (NRC 1996),
http://dels.nas.edu/ilar_n/ilarhome/guide.shtml

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