

UH IACUC Policy on Weight Loss in Research Animals
10/17/16 Michael Wong

IACUC Approved: 12/8/16	Other Approvals:
Revised and Approved:	

Weight loss in research animals, whether protocol approved due to food or water restriction or spontaneous secondary to injury or illness, can cause unnecessary pain and distress, and should be appropriately monitored with research animals being removed from a project when specific research end points are met, or the percentage (%) of weight loss from normal exceeds IACUC accepted level.

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 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.¹ Records should be available for examination by the veterinary staff and the institute Animal Care and Use Committee.

Please use the following guidelines when writing your IACUC protocol:

- Anticipated weight loss over 10% with a maximum loss of 20% due to experimental manipulation must be scientifically justified and described in the approved IACUC Protocol. The investigator must measure an initial baseline weight and must monitor and record subsequent weight loss.²
- Weight loss greater than 20% requires an IACUC variance, scientific justification, and determination by the veterinarian that the weight loss does not endanger the animal's health.²
- A plan of action, complete with endpoints for therapeutic intervention or euthanasia, should be described within the experimental protocol.²
- Depending on body condition (e.g. tumor studies), euthanasia may be required due to poor health condition, even though weight loss criteria may not have been met.

References:

1. Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (8th Edition)
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Guide-for-the-Care-and-Use-of-Laboratory-Animals.pdf>
2. Guidelines for Diet Control in Behavioral Animal Studies: National Institutes of Health, Office of Animal Care and Use
https://oacu.oir.nih.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/arac-guidelines/diet_control.pdf
3. Guidelines for Endpoints in Animal Study Proposals: National Institutes of Health, Office of Animal Care and Use
https://oacu.oir.nih.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/arac-guidelines/asp_endpoints.pdf