

Food and Fluid Restrictions – Policy & Guide

Performance standard: All animals receive species- or breed-specific qualities and quantities of food and water to promote health and assure well-being, except as scientifically justified for defined purposes and periods.

Definitions:

- **Standard for Food Intake:** "Animals should be fed palatable, uncontaminated diets that meet their nutritional and behavioral needs at least daily, or according to their particular requirements..." ([Guide, 2011, p. 65](#))
- **Standard for Water Intake:** "Animals should have access to potable, uncontaminated drinking water according to their particular requirements." ([Guide, 2011, p. 67](#))
- **Deprivation** is complete withholding of either food or fluid and has a defined end time. Animals are tested, then returned to free access, or otherwise removed from study.
- **Restriction** describes controlled rations, typically for a prolonged period of time. These protocols usually produce a physiologic need that influences motivation and behavior.
- **Ad libitum** is unrestricted access. Not necessarily "gold standard" for all species.
- **Surgical procedure fasting** refers to food only and is exempted from these guidelines. The goal is to have a relatively empty GI tract to prevent retrograde movement of food & digestive acids and associated complications such as aspiration pneumonia. Appropriate periods can vary according to species, age, condition, etc.

Guidelines:

- A consult with the Attending Veterinarian at [LARC](#) is recommended.
- When designing condition-response studies, the IACUC recommends use of a highly preferred food or fluid as a positive reinforcement/motivator, instead of restriction.
- Significant periods of acute deprivation or chronic restriction of water or food requires scientific justification for IACUC approval.
- Body weights should be recorded at least weekly or more often for animals requiring greater restrictions. For situations where weekly weights are not feasible (for example, juvenile fish) a plan for monitoring the impacts of restriction should be described in an approved IACUC protocol.
- Written records should be maintained for each animal documenting daily food/fluid consumption, hydration status, and any behavioral or clinical changes
- The proposal should include:
 - establishing baseline weight
 - acclimation schedule, as appropriate
 - appropriate periodic weighing
 - health monitoring and acceptable parameters or endpoints for species and age
 - environmental enrichment considerations if a social animal must be isolated
 - plans for removal from study if health conditions are not acceptable
- Age-related control weights or growth curves should be considered during prolonged periods of restriction.