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.
• 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:
  o establishing baseline weight
  o acclimation schedule, as appropriate
  o appropriate periodic weighing
  o health monitoring and acceptable parameters or endpoints for species and age
  o environmental enrichment considerations if a social animal must be isolated
  o 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.