Denver | Anschutz

IACUC
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Subject:	**Animal Restraint**
Source	Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
Effective Date	08/10/2026
Replaces:	08/14/2023
Applies to:	Personnel involved in Research or Teaching involving animals.
Reference:	Animal Welfare Act; PHS Policy on Humane Care & Use of Laboratory Animals. Guide for the Care & Use of Laboratory Animals

Introduction

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) provides oversight of the institution's animal care and use program, ensuring compliance with federally mandated regulations, ethical standards, and institutional policies governing the humane use of animals in research and teaching at the University of Colorado Denver | Anschutz. The IACUC evaluates and reviews all activities related to the care and use of animals and determines if the proposed activities are in accordance with regulations.

Policy Statement

This policy provides information on the definition of physical restraint, the approved types of restraint, and establishes standard procedures to be followed during the use of physical restraint devices. These issues of restraint are relevant only to the conscious animal,

- **Restraint** is defined as the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal movement, resulting in any significant limitation on normal spontaneous movement or postural adjustments for the purpose of sample collection, drug administration, or experimental manipulation.

- **Routine restraint** of laboratory animals is defined as confinement manually, or in a standard species-specific restraint device, for less than 15 minutes:
    - As long as this level of restraint does not cause clinical signs of distress or discomfort to the animal, routine restraint does not require a detailed description or scientific justification on the Protocol Application Form.
        - Examples of standard commercial devices include standard rodent decapitation cones, cylindrical/tunnel restrainers for tail vein injections, rabbit restraint devices, etc.
    - Any restraint of conscious animals for longer than 15 minutes or the use of non-standard species-specific restraining devices or any laboratory custom-built restraint device is considered non-routine restraint.

- **Non-routine restraint** is defined as animal restraint for longer than 15 minutes, or which is more confining than standard restraining devices commonly used for that species, or which causes changes in the animal's behavior, or physiologic parameters, suggesting that the awake animal is experiencing distress or discomfort:

- Restraint that involves adverse physiological responses or is likely to induce significant physical or psychological distress to the animal will require scientific justification and an alternatives search, regardless of the restraint duration or technique.
- Non-routine restraint must be fully described, including a clear description of the restraint device, and be scientifically justified by answering all applicable sections in the Protocol Form.
- Each animal use protocol proposing the use of non-routine restraint will be considered and reviewed by the IACUC on a case-by-case basis.
- When non-routine restraint devices are used, they must be specifically designed to accomplish research goals that are impossible or impracticable to accomplish by other means.

The following are important guidelines for prolonged or non-routine restraint:

- Restraint devices should not be considered normal methods of housing.
- Restraint duration should be the minimum needed to accomplish research objectives.
- Animals should be adapted to the restraint devices (species and procedure-specific information defined by the Investigator in the IACUC protocol).
- The use of positive reinforcement is strongly encouraged, along with a gradual increase in time spent in the device. The use of negative reinforcement or not using an adaptation protocol should be described and justified in the protocol. The specific type of restraint device should be described in the protocol and include how restrictive the restraint device will be to normal movement.
  - Severely restrictive devices that are intended to prevent an animal from turning around must fit the animal snugly but not so tightly that it causes physical injury or impedes breathing.
- Animals must be observed at appropriate intervals. Such observations should be thoroughly described in the IACUC protocol.
- Criteria outlining when veterinary intervention and/or removal from the restraint and/or study must be reviewed and approved by the IACUC.

Compliance and Accountability

In accordance with regulatory requirements, failure to comply with this policy will result in a review by the IACUC. Depending on the severity of the violation, you will be required to complete additional training, and your privileges to conduct animal research at CU Denver | Anschutz may be suspended or completely revoked.

If your research privileges are suspended, your funding agency (e.g., NIH) and relevant regulatory agencies (e.g., USDA) will be informed about your violation of federal and/or local policies regarding the humane use of animals. This notification will have a direct impact on your ongoing funding for animal-related research.