IACUC Guideline: The Use of Physical Restraint of Vertebrate Animals

Purpose:

It is frequently necessary to physically restrain animals during examination as well as while administering substances and collecting samples. In most cases, only a short period of immobility is required. Occasionally administrations, sample collections, or treatments require a prolonged period of physical restraint. These guidelines are intended to assure that: (a) the method of restraint is appropriate for the species of animal, (b) the period of restraint is the minimum required for experimental/teaching objectives, (c) the personnel performing the restraint have been appropriately trained, and (d) when prolonged physical restraint is necessary, the physical, physiological and psychological effects on the animal are minimized.

Definition:

1. The Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals provides the following definition of physical restraint: "Physical restraint is the use of manual or mechanical means to limit some or all of an animal's normal movement for the purpose of examination, collection of samples, drug administration, therapy or experimental manipulation."
2. During physical restraint, an animal is prevented from making normal postural adjustments.

Guidelines:

1. Personnel performing the restraint must be familiar with the equipment and appropriate method of restraint for the species.
2. The period of restraint must be the minimum necessary to accomplish the objectives.
3. Restraint devices should be appropriate for the species and be designed to prevent injury to animals and personnel.
4. Prolonged physical restraint (lasting longer than 30 minutes) must be scientifically justified and requires prior approval by the IACUC. In addition to adequate justification, the procedures described should include a process for training the animals to adapt to the prolonged restraint, as well as a provision to remove animals from the study that fail to adapt.

   NOTE: Less-restrictive systems that do not limit an animal's ability to make normal postural adjustments, such as a tether system for caged animals and stanchions for farm animals, are recommended when compatible with protocol objectives.

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