**Subject:** Prolonged Physical Restraint

**BACKGROUND**

The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (the *Guide*, NRC 2011) states: “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. Animals are restrained for brief periods (minutes) in many research applications.” (p. 29)

Restraint that is more than momentary or causes more than slight pain and/or distress may be considered prolonged restraint. As the duration of restraint increases, a concomitant increase in attention should be given to alternatives to restraint, the health and well-being of the animal, and endpoint criteria for the restraint. Prolonged physical restraint must be described and approved in the IACUC protocol.

**IACUC Policy**

Prolonged physical restraint of a conscious laboratory animal must be avoided unless it is essential for achieving the research objectives and is specifically approved by the IACUC. Alternatives to physical restraint should be considered.

Restraint devices should be suitable in size, design, and operation to minimize discomfort, pain, distress, and the potential for injury to the animal and the research staff.

Training and acclimation of the animals to restraint devices should be performed. Animals that do not adapt to necessary restraint systems should be removed from the study.

The purpose of the restraint and the duration should be clearly explained to the personnel involved with the study.

The period of restraint should be the minimum required to accomplish the research objectives.

Animals in restraint devices must be observed at appropriate intervals. Such observations should be thoroughly described in the IACUC protocol. Observations may include a physical examination, an evaluation of the animal’s behavior, and/or an assessment of various physiologic measures, such as concentrations of hormones or blood glucose. Detailed records should indicate the date, time, observer’s name, and the observations made.

Animals injured or ill as a result of the restraint must be evaluated by a veterinarian.

**References**
