### Purpose of Policy:
This policy is intended to ensure that animal well-being is maintained to the extent possible during the course of a scientific study.

### Policy Information:
The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* states that food and water restriction should be the “least restriction necessary to achieve the scientific objective while maintaining animal well-being.” Section F19 of the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare’s (OLAW) FAQs states that “The IACUC must evaluate the level of restriction and potential adverse consequences in regulating food or fluid. The IACUC must also evaluate the methods for assessing the health and well-being of animals involved in activities that regulate food or fluid consumption.”

Food and/or water restriction are at times necessary for valid scientific reasons. However, such restrictions can potentially cause distress in laboratory animals and, therefore, must be

1. scientifically justified,
2. performed in a manner that will minimize risk to the animals’ well-being, and
3. approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

The IACUC has, therefore, established the following guidelines for food and/or water restriction.

- The least restriction that will achieve the scientific objective should be used.
- Animals should be monitored at least daily to determine that they are in good health.
- Body weights should be recorded at least weekly and more often if the restriction is severe.
- Written records should be maintained for each animal documenting their daily food and water intake and health status, including any behavioral changes that might suggest they should be removed from the study.
- Any form of restriction that will cause more than a 15% loss in body weight will require rigorous scientific justification.
- The animal care staff must be fully informed of the need for restriction to prevent animals from receiving improper rations.
- Cages housing restricted animals should be clearly identified by means of a card or some other means.
In conditioned-response studies, the use a highly preferred food or liquid as a positive reinforcement might circumvent the need for restriction. When restricting water, skin turgor, mucous membrane dryness and urine output should be monitored for signs of dehydration. Behavioral changes that suggest stress include, but are not limited to, changes in sleep cycles, abnormal social interactions, cage chewing, barbering, abnormal vocalizations and aggression.