

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Policy on Weight Loss

Immature animals: maximum weight loss is a deviation of 15% from recognized growth curves or age-matched control animals.

All protocols involving excessive weight loss will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Background: Weight losses may occur in research animals in association with a variety of experimental regimens including studies where feed and essential nutrients are withheld, such as studies of nutritional deficiencies, toxicology or cancer. Weight loss also occurs in association with many spontaneous diseases and is a prime indicator of declining clinical condition. Moderate food restriction and weight loss, rather than being detrimental, has been shown to promote health and extend the life of laboratory rodents and other species. The IACUC has accepted weight losses of up to 20% as a general humane limit. However, some studies may result in weight losses of greater than 20% that can be scientifically justified.

Policy: The upper limit of acceptable weight loss in animals on experimental regimens shall generally be 20%. Written scientific justification must be provided to the IACUC for approval of a greater than 20% weight loss. In studies where weight loss is expected to occur, monitoring must be done by investigative staff trained and experienced in recognizing clinical signs of illness and distress in study animals. Weights must also be taken at least weekly under such circumstances and be readily available for review by the veterinary staff and the IACUC. In their protocol submissions, investigators must address situations where weight loss will exceed limits that are being proposed, and remedial measures that will be taken. Veterinary staff may intervene when such remedial measures prove ineffective or to address weight losses that occur in excess of 20% of pre-study body weight in any research animal, or when other limits approved by the IACUC have been reached or exceeded. Such intervention may include euthanasia. Exceptions to this policy will be allowed only if there is a veterinary determination that weight losses exceeding approved limits are not endangering animal health and well-being and a specific waiver is obtained from the IACUC.

REVISED: December 18, 2012