

Guidance for Quantifying Criteria for Euthanasia

The IACUC Protocol Review Form (Section V) asks investigators to describe in detail how laboratory personnel will determine at what point euthanasia of an animal is necessary. It is important to include quantifiable criteria to make this determination in order to minimize animal pain or distress. Defining these criteria is often difficult and can vary depending on study objectives.

The IACUC suggests the following criteria may be appropriate measures to use:

1. Loss of 10% body weight compared to pre-study, age-matched, or study-matched controls.
2. Complete anorexia for 24 hours or partial anorexia (less than 50% caloric requirement) for 3 days (the latter can be difficult to quantify).
3. Inability to reach food or water, lesions that interfere with eating or drinking, reluctance to stand which persists for 24 hours.
4. Marked changes in behavior including: lethargy, abnormal vocalization, aggression, recumbency, rough hair coat or hunched posture.
5. Nonresponsive or unconscious behavior with no response to external stimuli such as handling or toe-pinch with drawl test.

Ultimately the criteria adopted is up to individual investigators, but whatever is used must be based on expected risk for procedures used in individual animal protocols and will require monitoring and documentation by laboratory members. All laboratory members who are responsible for making animal observations must be adequately trained to observe, recognize, and document the criteria as approved by the IACUC in the animal protocol.