

Euthanasia

Item 4 – Policy on Euthanasia for Humane Purposes

Regulatory authorities highly discourage the use of death as an endpoint in **any** type of experiment. Whenever possible, investigators should provide precise information within their protocol concerning the endpoint of each experiment; either by specific time points or specific data criteria (tumor size, weight loss, etc.)

Investigators **ARE REQUIRED** to euthanize moribund experimental animals **UNLESS** they have provided significant scientific support that euthanasia would invalidate experimental data collection **AND** the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) has approved the protocol with the understanding that death will be used as an endpoint (Guidelines for Death as an Endpoint must be included with protocol).

Moribund is defined as “in a dying state.” Animals (not under anesthesia) are considered moribund if they are unresponsive to manipulation or if they exhibit any of the following:

1. Inability to obtain food and/or water.
2. Cachexia (body weight at least 20% lower than a “normal” animal of the same sex, strain and age; not including estimated weight of tumors, abnormal fluid, etc.).
3. Species-specific behaviors indicative of severe untreatable pain and/or distress
4. Prolonged (>24 hours for rodents, >48 hours for others) inappetence and/or severe dehydration.
5. Insufficient respiration (producing cyanosis).
6. Hematologic, biochemical or physiologic parameters that indicate organ failure incompatible with life.

Animals identified by DLAR as fitting any of the above categories may be euthanized **AFTER** ensuring that there are no special endpoint criteria defined in the protocol and **AFTER** making a reasonable attempt to contact the investigator (or their “Primary Contact”) to allow for collection of tissues and/or other data.

If an investigator believes that their experimental procedures will result in animals that match any of the above criteria **prior** to the required endpoint, they **must** provide specific endpoint criteria within the IACUC protocol. Once approved, these criteria will be posted in the animal housing area to provide guidance to the DLAR veterinary staff in making the final decision regarding the need for euthanasia.

Although every reasonable attempt will be made to consult with the investigator and to follow the specific endpoint criteria outlined in the protocol, **ultimately, the responsibility for decisions on euthanasia lies with the DLAR veterinary staff.**

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