IACUC Policy on Food and Water Restriction of Animals

Definitions:
Food or Water Restriction: A situation where the total volume of food or fluid consumed is strictly monitored or controlled.

Scheduled Access: Animal consumes as much as desired at regular intervals.

Policy:
Food or water restriction involving laboratory animals, other than for presurgical fasting, is often necessary for behavioral, psychological, neuroscientific or other testing. Because these procedures may cause more than momentary or slight distress to the animals, the USC IACUC has established the following policy and guidelines:

1. The objective when these studies are being planned and executed should be to use the least restriction necessary to achieve the scientific objective while maintaining animal well-being.
2. Dietary or water restriction/deprivation must be scientifically justified in the Animal Use Proposal (AUP) and approved by the IACUC.
3. Food and fluid intake must meet the nutritional needs of the animal.
4. A monitoring program for these animals must be described in the AUP. This should include physiological and behavioral parameters for assessment of pain or distress, including criteria (such as weight loss or hydration state) for temporary or permanent removal of the animals from the experiment. Body weight must not be allowed to drop below 80% of normal (taking into account the normal anticipated growth for that animal).
5. Precautions that should be used in cases of fluid restriction include daily recording of fluid intake and body weight at least three times per week (including weekends and holidays). This daily log sheet must be kept with the animals.
6. Special attention should be given to ensuring that animals consume a suitable balanced diet because food consumption may decrease with fluid restriction.
7. In the case of conditioned-response research protocols, the use of a highly preferred food or fluid as positive reinforcement is recommended instead of restriction.