Establishment of Humane Endpoints

The experimental endpoint of a study occurs when the scientific aims and objectives have been reached. The humane endpoint is the point at which pain or distress in an experimental animal is prevented, terminated, or relieved. The use of humane endpoints provides an alternative to experimental endpoints that may otherwise result in unrelieved or severe animal pain and distress including death. The humane endpoint should be relevant and reliable.

Information that is critical to the IACUC’s assessment of appropriate endpoint consideration in a protocol includes:

- precise definition of the humane endpoint (including assessment criteria)
- the frequency of animal observation
- training of personnel responsible for assessment and recognition of the humane endpoint
- the response required upon reaching the humane endpoint

Determination of humane endpoints should involve the PI, the veterinarian, and the IACUC, and should be defined when possible before the start of the study.