Body Condition Scoring for Mice

Description of Procedure

Scoring the body condition of rodents is a non-invasive method for assessing health and establishing endpoints for adults where body weight is not a viable monitoring tool, such as with tumor models, ascites production and pregnancy, or for young growing animals.

Body condition scores (BCS) range from 1 (emaciation) to 5 (obesity). An anticipated BCS of 2 – under-conditioned – or lower, requires justification in the protocol.

Scores are determined by frequent visual and hands-on examination of each animal. The hands-on evaluation is done by gently holding the mouse by the base of the tail and passing a finger over the sacroiliac bones. The findings are matched to the descriptions and diagrams on the following page to determine a score.
BC 1
Mouse is emaciated.
- Skeletal structure extremely prominent; little or no flesh cover.
- Vertebrae distinctly segmented.

BC 2
Mouse is underconditioned.
- Segmentation of vertebral column evident.
- Dorsal pelvic bones are readily palpable.

BC 3
Mouse is well-conditioned.
- Vertebrae and dorsal pelvis not prominent; palpable with slight pressure.

BC 4
Mouse is overconditioned.
- Spine is a continuous column.
- Vertebrae palpable only with firm pressure.

BC 5
Mouse is obese.
- Mouse is smooth and bulky.
- Bone structure disappears under flesh and subcutaneous fat.

A "+" or a "-" can be added to the body condition score if additional increments are necessary (i.e. ...2+, 2, 2-...)