

## **How is animal research regulated? / Understanding Animal Research.**

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## HOW IS ANIMAL RESEARCH REGULATED?

"BRITAIN HAS A HIGH REPUTATION FOR ITS STANDARDS OF REGULATING RESEARCH WHICH USES ANIMALS. THIS WORK... IS CRITICAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MEDICINES AND INCREASING THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF DISEASES. WE ARE A WORLD LEADER IN MEDICAL ADVANCES AND THE GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF THE PIONEERING WORK OF OUR SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS. WE ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING THIS WORK THROUGH THE SCIENCE BUDGET AND THROUGH OUR SUPPORT FOR THE NC3RS WHICH WORKS WITH SCIENTISTS TO REFINE, REDUCE AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE REPLACE THE USE OF ANIMALS IN RESEARCH." LORD DRAYSON, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION. 21 JULY 2009

### ABOUT US

Understanding Animal Research aims to achieve understanding and acceptance of the need for humane animal research in the UK, by maintaining and building informed public support and a favourable policy climate for animal research.

The information provided by Understanding Animal Research is based on thorough research and understanding of the facts, historical and scientific.

Understanding Animal Research seeks to engage with and inform many sectors to bring about its vision. Key stakeholders include members of the public, the media, policy makers, schools and the scientific research community.

### ALSO AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES:

- Why do we use animals in medical research?
- Animal research has benefits for us all - and for animals too
- From test tube to patient: the making of a medicine
- Animal research in numbers
- Animal welfare and the three Rs: replacement, refinement and reduction

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## HOW IS ANIMAL RESEARCH REGULATED?





#### HOW STRICT IS ANIMAL RESEARCH REGULATION?

Animal research in the UK has been regulated by central Government since 1876, and the special controls relating to laboratory animals were revised and extended in 1986 by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act. The Animal Procedures Committee – an independent advisory body with a membership that includes animal welfare experts, lawyers and scientists – advises the Home Secretary on matters concerned with the Act.

The UK's controls, which safeguard animal welfare while allowing important scientific research to be carried out, are widely regarded as the strictest in the world.

#### WHAT LICENCES ARE NEEDED TO DO ANIMAL RESEARCH?

Three separate types of licence are required for animal research or testing. By law, animal procedures must:

- take place in research establishments with appropriate animal accommodation and veterinary facilities, that have been granted a certificate of designation
- be part of an approved research or testing programme that has a project licence
- be carried out by people whose skills, training and experience have qualified them for a personal licence.

"WHERE ANIMAL RESEARCH IS THE ONLY OPTION, WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT THE BALANCE BETWEEN ANIMAL WELFARE AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT IS MAINTAINED."

JOAN RYAN, HOME OFFICE MINISTER, 2006

#### WHEN ARE LICENCES GRANTED?

Licences are only granted if these conditions are met:

- the potential results are important enough to justify the use of animals
- the research cannot be done using non-animal methods
- the minimum number of animals consistent with the aims of the study will be used
- dogs, cats or primates are only used when no other species is suitable
- any discomfort or suffering is kept to a minimum by appropriate anaesthetics or painkillers
- researchers and technicians conducting procedures have the necessary skills, training and experience
- research premises have the necessary facilities to look after the animals properly.

#### HOW IS ANIMAL RESEARCH REGULATED?

##### ARE ANIMAL RESEARCH CENTRES INSPECTED?

Yes. The Home Office employs a dedicated team of qualified doctors and vets as inspectors to ensure all research complies with the regulations. In addition to assessing licence applications, inspectors visit each research establishment on average once a month – often without warning.

##### ARE THERE ADDITIONAL CONTROLS?



Since 1999 it has been compulsory for all establishments breeding or using animals for research to set up a local ethical review process. The process examines the ethics of proposed projects and suggests ways to improve adoption of three Rs principles (see also our leaflet *Animal welfare and the three Rs: replacement, refinement and reduction*).

The UK is the only nation in the world that regulates animal research with both central Government controls and local ethical reviews.

##### EUROPEAN REGULATION

In 1986, the EU adopted a Directive on 'the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes'. A draft revision was published at the end of 2008. The European Parliament, Council of Ministers and European Commission have to agree before any revision can be accepted and subsequently implemented by member states.

For more information, see: [www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy\\_issues/european\\_regulation](http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy_issues/european_regulation)

"UK REGULATIONS ARE AMONGST THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND RIGOROUS AND BY LAW NO ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS ARE CONDUCTED IF THERE IS A REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE. ANY PROPOSED EXPERIMENT INVOLVING ANIMALS IS UNDER STRINGENT ETHICAL CONTROL AND REGULARLY REVIEWED." SOCIETY OF BIOLOGY, 2009

##### OTHER RELEVANT REGULATIONS

Safety testing is usually carried out so that medicines and other products meet UK, foreign or international regulations. Relevant UK laws and regulations include:

- Medicines Act 1968
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 1988
- Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986
- Food and Environment Protection Act 1985
- Food Safety Act 1990
- Consumer Protection Act 1987

##### PROGRESS BEFORE PROFIT

Animal research is much more expensive than other, non-animal, methods. The high cost is largely due to the number of skilled staff needed to look after the animals' welfare, the requirement to have vets on call at all times and the responsibility to house animals in first class facilities.

Research using animals is also time consuming, complex and highly regulated – so it is difficult to see why researchers would undertake it unless it were absolutely necessary.

##### FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find out more about the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and other relevant legislation at <http://scienceandresearch.homeoffice.gov.uk/animal-research/legislation/>