

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.

HOW IS ANIMAL RESEARCH REGULATED?

“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, 2011

ALSO AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES:

[Why do we use animals in medical research?](#)
[Animal research benefits us - and animals too](#)
[How much animal research is done in the UK?](#)
[Animal welfare and the three Rs: replacement, refinement and reduction](#)

IMAGE CREDIT

Cover: © Aeronautics/iStockphoto

Understanding Animal Research
Telephone: 020 7685 2670
Email: info@uar.org.uk
Web: www.UnderstandingAnimalResearch.org.uk





“Monkeys are only used where they are the only species suitable to achieve the scientific objective” Professor Roger Lemon, UCL Institute of Neurology, 2010

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 law safeguards animals while allowing important medical research to continue.

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 related to the Act.

WHAT LICENCES ARE NEEDED TO DO ANIMAL RESEARCH?

Three separate types of licence are required for animal research or testing. Under the 1986 Act 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.

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 advanced 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’.

The Directive was revised at the end of 2010. European member states have until the beginning of 2013 to implement the Directive nationally.

For more information, see www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk

OTHER RELEVANT REGULATIONS

Safety testing is usually carried out so that medicines and other products meet UK, foreign or international regulations. Other 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 generally 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://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/animal-research/>