

# Protecting animals used in medical experiments

The EU wants to replace current **animal protection** rules with new ones.

These rules cover animals that are used in **medical experiments**.

# How to have your say

These pages explain what the UK government thinks about the EU's new law on animal welfare, and asks you to comment.

They have agreed with some of the new law, and disagreed with some as well. They are also asking for your opinions on bits where they are not sure about what to recommend.

Please send your thoughts on this consultation by **3 July 2009** to:

**Animals Scientific Procedures Division**

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# What we agree on

The UK government mostly agrees with these bits of the new law:

- When animals with a spine (that is, **vertebrates**, like mice, rabbits, primates and birds) are developing (before they are born) current UK law protects them **after half of that time**. The new EU law protects them after **two-thirds** of that time, and the UK government will support that because it's so similar to the current law.
- When animals are **tagged** for identification, the UK government agrees that this shouldn't be covered in animal welfare law because any suffering is over very quickly.
- The new law wants to cover all places that **breed, supply or kill** animals for medical experiments, which UK law doesn't currently do. The UK government thinks this will add a lot more paperwork, but it is still probably necessary as long as we don't go overboard.
- The UK government agrees with the EU rules saying that **medical experiments on animals** should **only** be for:
  - helping us **learn** more about **biology** and **behaviour**
  - **avoiding, stopping, discovering** or **treating disease** in humans, animals and plants
  - **learning to understand, notice, change** or **keep** a person, animal or plant **alive**
  - testing **drugs** or **food** that help with the above
  - **protecting** nature and keeping **endangered** species alive
  - **education** and **training**
  - detecting **crime** (forensics).

# What we agree on

- The UK government wants to include **breeding animals** in the experiment list and will ask the EU to do so.
- The EU law stops people doing experiments on a long list of **endangered** animals, unless there are **absolutely no alternatives**.
- The new law more or less bans people from using **great apes** (gorillas, chimps and orangutans) except in very special circumstances. The UK has a **total ban** currently, and this is close enough that the UK government supports it. The UK will keep their **total ban** on using great apes, though.
- Animals **should not be taken from the wild** for use in experiments. This is the same as current UK law.
- **Frogs, mice, hamsters, rats, gerbils, rabbits, dogs, cats** and **primates** should only be used in animal medical experiments if they have been bred for them specially. **Frogs** are not on our current list, but the UK government is happy to include them. We will be looking at getting special arrangements for when these animals are not suitable.
- Just like UK law now, **stray** and **feral** animals shouldn't be used for medical experiments.
- At all times, the **smallest** number of animals needed should be used, with **pain** and **suffering minimised** as much as possible.

# What we agree on

- **Anaesthetic** or **painkillers** should be used when they are needed, and if the animal is in pain that cannot be avoided it should be **killed humanely**.
- There should be a system in place so that when scientists ask for animals for their experiments, they have to say **what degree of pain or suffering** the animal will have. This already exists in the UK. The system in the new EU law isn't really complete, though, and needs looking at closely.
- At the end of an experiment, a **vet** should decide whether to keep the animal alive, or kill it humanely if it will be in lasting pain or distress.
- There need to be **rules** for **sharing and storing** dead animal **organs and tissue**.
- People should hold a **licence** that needs **renewing** every **five years** for dealing with animals in medical experiments.
- **Breeding, sharing and experimenting** companies need to house and treat their animals well.
- Companies should set up an **ethics board** to help them with animal welfare.
- Where animals can be **re-homed**, they should be, and there should be **re-homing schemes** to help them **adjust to domestic life**.
- The records on animal **births, deaths, transfer, rehoming, and more** should be kept for **three years**. Cats, dogs and primates should have more information recorded about them.

# What we agree on

- There should be **two inspections** of premises that handle animals for medical testing a year – one that they are **told about** and one **surprise inspection**.
- The **EU Food and Veterinary office** should oversee the results of the inspections.
- To get medical experiments authorised, the experimenters must say **how** they are going to look after **animal welfare** in **detail**.
- Experiments should be looked at again **when they end**, to make sure they achieved what they meant to do, and obeyed animal welfare rules.
- If an experiment ends before it's time – if it was stopped because of animal welfare or for other reasons – animal welfare should not be affected.
- The UK government is in favour of developing **alternatives to animal testing**. However the new EU law is not clear about **how** countries should contribute towards this. The new law states that there should be labs set up in each country to tackle the problem, and puts a price tag of **£100,000** on that. The UK government believes it will **cost much more** to set up and maintain. They would like instead for there to be a **central database** of research which existing laboratories can feed into.
- The UK government supports a **new national organisation** to oversee animal welfare and related ethical questions, but would like ideas on how to set this up.



# What we agree on

- The UK government also agree to **reporting statistics** on how animals are used in medical testing every year, but they would like to know **what these statistics should include** before the new law is in place.
- The UK government supports a **report seven years** after this law on how effective it's been, but thinks that is **not soon enough**, because technology moves so fast and things could be very different seven years from now.
- The whole law will be **reviewed in ten years**, and the UK government agrees with this but thinks that **there should be mini-reviews** in the meantime as well.
- The UK government agrees there should be **penalties** for not obeying this law. However, as mentioned before, the EU needs to think carefully about how stopping an experiment affects animal welfare, as this could mean animals are killed unnecessarily.

# How we disagree

However there are also rules in the new EU law that the UK government don't agree with:

- The UK government thinks there will be **too much extra paperwork** if animals that are bred **only** for use in medical experiments are covered by the new rules. These animals are already covered by **UK animal welfare laws** and scientists would have to **fill out even more forms** which might **delay useful research**.
- The EU wants to protect some **invertebrates** (that is, creatures without a spine, like squid, shrimp and prawns). The UK government **doesn't think there's enough evidence that they suffer pain**.
- The EU wants to make veterinary clinical trials, that is **trials of new drugs and treatments** for animal health separate from the laws on animal welfare. The UK government does not agree with this, because it makes it **much more difficult** to work out **whether** the animals are **being treated well** in the trial.
- The EU want **all medical tests** that don't involve any **pain or suffering** to not fall under this new law, however this means that things like genetic testing and breeding programmes wouldn't be covered, so the UK will be asking the EU to **make what they mean clearer**.
- The EU's list of **humane ways to kill an animal** is not complete – it's **missing** some ways that have been proved, puts in some **unproven** ways of killing an animal humanely, and doesn't recommend anything for some animals, including most **invertebrates**.

# How we disagree

- The new law is **much stricter about using primates** (monkeys like marmosets) than current UK law. Changing to the EU law might mean that **some experiments**, including important **fertility** experiments and tests on **eyes** and vision, could **no longer happen**.
- The EU want to end **breeding from primates that have been captured in the wild** over a **seven year** period. The UK doesn't believe that's enough time to get a proper breeding programme in place and the EU needs better plans to deal with there not being enough primates.
- **Painkillers** shouldn't only be given when there is a lot of pain when the **anaesthetic** wears off, they should be given when they're **needed**.
- The EU law stops experiments where the animal suffers over a long period of time, however some **current research** into **Parkinsons' disease** might fall outside of these rules and we would have to stop the experiments.
- The new law suggests that **animals** should be used in experiments **again**, as long as the experiment was **mild** and the animal has **recovered**, the animal is expected **not to survive** the next experiment, or the **next** experiment is **mild**. The UK government does not support this because some experiments involving surgery, for example, might be moderately painful, but can be repeated. They think that this new law will mean many more **dogs** and **primates** are used in experiments.

# How we disagree

- There is **nothing** in the new law about **killing** an animal **humanely** if after an experiment they need the animal dead to **test** it's **body** and get the final **results**. The UK government will look into adding this to the law.
- The people who look after the **design** and **supervise** medical **experiments** should **not need to know** how to handle an animal directly. This part of the new law could lead to **inexperienced** staff taking on more senior roles.
- Companies which breed, supply or use animals in medical experiments **do need a licence**, as the new law says, however the UK government believes that law covers **too much** – **livestock** breeders of cows, sheep, and so on would **also need licensing** and this would cost a lot of money to set up and regulate.
- **Failing** the licensing process at any point under the new law would mean that **programmes** would have to **stop** and **animals killed**. The UK government believes that minor offences should not lead to such drastic action.
- Some experiments would be **beyond the expertise** of a **general practice vet**, like fish, or embryos, and the UK wants to see alternative supervisors added to the list.
- The EU has set out detailed and **compulsory** rules about how **animals** should be **housed and cared for**. The UK government thinks they are **not flexible enough**, and in some cases give animals **less room to move** around, for instance, than UK laws allow.

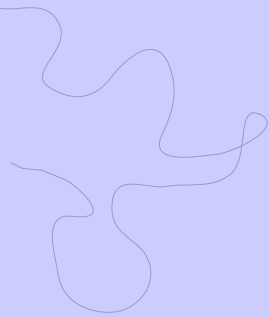
# How we disagree

- The UK government is worried that needing **absolute approval** on animal welfare matters from **inspectors** before a project can go ahead will mean **less experiments** that could be **worthwhile** or **done differently** get permission to run because there is **less chance** to talk to inspectors about what needs to be done.
- They do **not** think it is **clear** who will decide when an inspection is needed after the experiment is over.
- The EU law will only let experiments run for **four years**. The **current** time in the **UK** is **five years**, and there would be a lot of cost involved in reducing that time. The UK Government wants to ask for 5 years.
- There is a **30-day limit** for most projects to get told whether they can go ahead or not in the new EU law, and **60 days** for more complicated experiments. The UK government worries that is **not enough** and should be **more flexible**.
- The new law says that **data** on the study (including results) should be **available to all member states**, to avoid **duplication**. The UK government is not sure that duplication is a common problem, and they are worried that **researchers based outside of the EU** will be put off using UK based labs because their data won't be private.
- This law was made by the European Commission, and can be helped by a specially formed committee if needed. It's never been written down **who** this committee are and **what** they can do, and they have not met up at all yet. The UK government wants to make sure that information is written down.

# One more thing...

The EU has also asked that we think about how we can enforce this law on protecting animal welfare. Do we need, for example, any one or a combination of:

- A national government organisation that oversees everything?
- Government organisations at a regional level?
- Non-government organisations that are chosen specially.
- Self-assessment options.



This translation of government-speak has been brought to you by:

**simply understand**

It is totally unofficial, and inexcusably late, but I hope you find it much easier to understand than the **original!**