



Working with Animals Policy

April 2010

Document title		
Working with Animals Policy April 2010		
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Approving body		Date of approval
Directorate		29 March 2010, Min 10/120
Review date	Edition no.	ID code
April 2013	2	80
EITHER		OR
For public access online (internet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>		For staff access only (intranet)? <i>Tick as appropriate</i>
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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Working with Animals Policy

The University's strategic plan includes an emphasis on high quality research. In a University where biological and biomedical sciences are of major importance, animals are essential for research and teaching. Until satisfactory alternatives have been developed, the processes of discovery, enquiry and teaching require a limited number of procedures that involve animals. These provide knowledge and understanding of biological structure, physiological and pathological processes, and pass on essential knowledge to students.

None of the work involving animals protected by UK law performed at the University of Portsmouth can be done without the approval of its Ethical Review (ER) Committee and the Home Office. The ER Committee – whose members include a vet, animal care staff, academic staff and lay people, some of whom are independent of the University – scrutinise proposals for their scientific and ethical justification of animal use.

The ethical review process is to a large extent enshrined by the tenets of the **3Rs**, that is, **R**eduction, **R**efinement and **R**eplacement. Thus, some of the questions that will be considered as part of the ethical process when proposals are reviewed are as follows: a) Will it be possible to **reduce** the number of animals used in a study by good scientific and experimental design? b) Can the experiments be **refined** to improve the welfare of the animals? c) Will it be possible to **replace** an animal based experiment by using other techniques? The UK law which governs the use of animals is widely viewed as the most rigorous piece of legislation of its type in the world and the Home Office Inspectors who administer it maintain a continuous inspections programme of facilities where work is carried out, the welfare of animals and the expertise of staff involved in animal care, research or teaching. All staff working with animals protected by the UK law are required to attend accredited courses before they can apply for the licences that allow them to proceed.

There are some experimental procedures and animal species (mostly invertebrate) that do not fall under the Home Office law and do not require a licence. However, the University of Portsmouth has adopted the principle that even these experiments need to be ethically reviewed by the ER Committee using similar criteria as for animals protected by UK law before they are allowed.

The University of Portsmouth has a culture of reduction in the usage of live animals or animal tissues in both teaching and research and uses alternative methods wherever possible. In any work involving animals, the policy of the University of Portsmouth is to adhere to high standards of humane care and treatment of those animals. The University has designed and built appropriate facilities and has set up procedures designed to meet these requirements and to comply with relevant laws and guidelines. The overriding considerations are that:

- Research on animals is conducted only when it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge that is likely to lead to improvement of the health and welfare of animals and human beings, or provide a better understanding of the animals themselves.
- The University conducts studies involving animals on the basis of well-defined scientific objectives, giving due consideration to the welfare of the animals, minimising the number of animals employed in each test, and avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- Where animals are used in teaching, to provide practical training to relevant students, the same principles of minimising numbers and maximising animal welfare are practised.
- The University actively supports the development, validation and adoption of appropriate alternatives to the use of animals in order to eliminate the need for animals in both research and teaching. *In vitro* studies are used as substitutes for whole-animal studies whenever such tests are feasible, and computer simulations of animal experiments are widely used whenever possible for teaching purposes to minimise animal usage further.
- All animals used by the University for research or teaching purposes are subject to inspection by a qualified Veterinary Officer, and laboratory animals that are protected by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act, 1986 are purpose bred at premises licensed by the Home Office.
- Animals are transported, housed and cared for by dedicated and trained staff under professional supervision in a manner designed to ensure the best health and well-being of the animal.
- Members of the veterinary profession are available at all times for consultation, care and attendance.
- Where the use of animals remains essential, the University of Portsmouth is committed to a culture of care and respect for animal welfare.

For further details please see:

- Information on rules and procedures in research and testing using animals from the Home Office:
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/animal-testing/
- Information about UAR – (UK organisation representing medical researchers in the public debate about the use of animals in medical research and testing):
www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/homepage
- Information about the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3RS):
www.nc3rs.org.uk/
- Information about the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT):
www.iat.org.uk

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