



National Anti-Vivisection Society

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NAVS Parliamentary Briefing:

Adoption of EU Directive 2010/63 on use of animals for scientific purposes Adjournment Debate: 7 December 2011

1. What is the current legal framework in the UK on the use of animals in laboratories?

The EU has adopted a new Directive on animals testing (Directive 2010/63/EU); now the UK Government (Home Office) will be amending the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to comply with the new Directive. Following a public consultation on this issue, the Home Office is currently analysing the responses and putting together a draft proposal which will be sent to Parliament next year.

2. Will the new rules relax the UK's stricter measures to protect animals in laboratories?

Some of the UK's stricter measures include: the ban on the use of great apes in scientific procedures (introduced in November 1997), ban on the used of animals in certain painful forms of monoclonal antibody production, a three tier licensing system for establishments, personnel and projects, as a requirement to carry out animal testing, methods of killing, protection of embryonic and foetal forms of mammals from midway through gestation. The Directive (Article 2) allows Member States to maintain "Stricter national measures" which aim at ensuring "more extensive protection" of animals than the Directive contains. Recently Lord Henley, Minister responsible for animal testing at the Home Office, announced to the House: "*I can give an absolute and categorical assurance that we will not be dropping our standards in any way whatever.*" MPs must ensure that the Government delivers on this promise.

3. What should the Government do to improve accountability and transparency of animal experiments?

Greater transparency surrounding animal testing increases public accountability and is integral to improving animal welfare and adoption of advanced scientific techniques, which is good for UK science. The following steps will facilitate this:

- **Retrospective Assessment** of all animal experiments conducted by the Home Office to determine whether a project has successfully achieved its objectives (or not) and established the actual suffering experienced by the animals involved. The reviews should take place, automatically, at the end of the project licence term. This will provide invaluable feedback into the cost-benefit assessment for future projects.
- **Inspections.** A number of failings in the existing inspection system have previously been revealed by the NAVS. The number of inspections must be maintained, or increased. A system involving CCTV monitoring is the recommended way of ensuring that laboratory working practices and the conditions in which the animals are kept are monitored and scrutinised constantly by the Animals Scientific Procedures Inspectorate (ASPI).
- **Project licences.** In order to provide more independent and scientific scrutiny before project licences are granted, all applications should be placed online. This would allow stakeholders to identify trends in animal testing, avoid unnecessary duplication of experiments and to assess the progress made towards the replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of the use of animals in research. A time limit can be set on the response period to facilitate effective processing of applications.
- **Mechanisms for stakeholders to challenge animal experiments** on scientific or ethical grounds.

4. How will alternative methods to animal testing be implemented in practice?

Advanced, cutting edge technologies and computer analysis, modelling and data can be used instead of animals. All of these methods avoid the problem of species differences and are directly relevant to humans. Wherever possible, a scientifically satisfactory non-animal testing method or strategy should be used. Currently, not enough is done to verify that researchers have thoroughly considered non-animal methods. The Home Office needs to define more clearly what practical consideration needs to be performed by the researcher and if a non-animal method is available for all or part of the research it must be used. The government must adopt measures to increase the availability of alternatives such as creating a UK laboratory for the development and validation of replacement (non-animal) methods, and ensure their effective implementation and drive this forward in the EU.

5. Will primates continue to be used for animal testing in UK laboratories?

According to the 6th EU statistics on the use of animals for experimental and scientific procedures, the UK was the largest primate user of all the Member States. The new Directive incorporates restrictions on the use of primates so that they are only for used for basic research and the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of “debilitating or potentially life-threatening clinical conditions”. An exhaustive list of medical conditions should be drafted, in consultation with the public and stakeholders, to clarify the diseases, illnesses and conditions for which primate use may be allowed with specific proscribed uses.

6. Will primates still be captured from the wild and used for breeding?

The NAVS recently exposed the limitations on setting and ensuring standards in designated overseas primate suppliers. The Home Office has been shown to be relatively powerless in terms of ensuring humane treatment of primates by overseas suppliers. Although the Directive includes a phase-out prohibition of use of F1 monkeys (born of wild-caught parents) a 12 year phase-out is too long. The UK Government must take the lead on the implementation and set a much earlier deadline.

7. What mechanisms are there for reducing animal use?

One mechanism with great potential is *thematic review*. This system involves the selection of specific animal experiments, or types of experiment and/or animal use, which are put forward for examination with a view to replacement with non-animal methods. This is essential to ensure progress and constant reassessment of animal use in light of advances in technology and increasing in animal welfare knowledge. The thematic review process must involve all stakeholders and be managed by the European Commission. Areas can be identified where replacement would be most speedy, or where animal suffering is high, few animals used, or where the research is likely to produce little or no perceivable benefit for humans.

8. Should the requirements for carrying out animal experiments be tightened?

There should be an increase in the detail required for all project licence applications to experiment on animals; a critical and meaningful assessment of the proposed work is necessary. Specific justification and explanation should be given if it is claimed that the project cannot avoid the use of live animals and why alternative methods are unsuitable. There should also be a central review of licence applications by the Home Office with increased input from stakeholders during decision making.

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Please attend the adjournment debate on animals in experiments on Wednesday 7th December and speak in support of NAVS’ priorities – no de-regulation of current UK measures.