

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Policy on working with animals

The University's strategy 2030¹ states that 'Our dynamic and innovative research culture will foster new discoveries, inspire creativity and bring people together to solve the challenges of today and tomorrow.'

In a University where biological sciences and medicine have a high profile and are critical to the delivery of the strategy, animals remain important to research and teaching. Until satisfactory alternatives have been developed, the processes of discovery, enquiry and teaching require approaches that involve animals in order to gain a knowledge and understanding of molecular biology, ecology, behaviour, physiology and pathology and in order to pass on that knowledge to students.

Scientists at the University of Exeter, in common with many other researchers, are constantly seeking ways to follow the principles of the '3Rs²'; to reduce the number of animals needed for their research and for teaching; refine experimental methods, and replace animals wherever possible. However, alternative tests and models have yet to be developed that can properly reproduce the complex biological characteristics of humans and animals, and studies of wild animals in their natural environment will always require the involvement of the animals themselves. The University's 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, either to demonstrate fundamental principles or to provide practical training, 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

¹ <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/strategy2030/>

² NC3Rs <https://nc3rs.org.uk/>

whenever such tests are feasible, and cadavers and audio-visual technology are used in teaching.

In the UK, research and teaching activities involving animals are governed by a range of legislation, chief of which is the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA)³. Compliance of research involving these species is monitored by the University's Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers, Named Veterinary Surgeon(s), Named Training and Competency Officer and by the Home Office through its inspectors. All members of the University carrying out procedures regulated under the Act must by law have prior training, relevant experience, and licence authority from the Home Office and must work to the exacting requirements of the Home Office and funding agencies.

All projects involving the use of animals are subject to formal ethical review within the University, either by the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Board (AWERB) where the project requires a Home Office Project Licence, or by one of the University's Research Ethics Committees following guidelines set out by the AWERB. The membership of the AWERB at Exeter includes an independent member.

In any work involving animals of protected species, the policy of the University of Exeter is to adhere to high standards of humane care and treatment of those animals. The University has designed and built facilities and has set up work programmes to meet these requirements and to comply with relevant laws and guidelines.

All animals obtained by the University for research are subject to inspection and approval by the University's Named Veterinary Surgeon, and all animals that are protected by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) are obtained from establishments licensed by the Home Office or appropriate commercial supplier. Studies on farm and wild animals and those not classed as protected animals are subject to stringent wildlife and agricultural laws and the Named Veterinary Surgeon(s), Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers and Named Training and Competency Officer monitor all such studies to ensure compliance.

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, with provisions for environmental enrichment. Members of the veterinary profession are available at all times for consultation, care and attendance. The University of Exeter is committed to the responsible use of animals in its research and teaching activities. All University personnel who supervise or undertake activities involving animals are trained to carry out their duties in a responsible and humane manner and maintain up to date records of their training and competency.

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With acknowledgements to the University of Bristol 'Policy on Working with Animals'

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/research-and-testing-using-animals>