

1. Introduction statement on the University's activities involving animals

The University's strategy 2030 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 life 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 ethical use of animals in order to gain scientific knowledge and understanding and to pass on that knowledge to students.

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. We aim to use alternatives to animal models both in research and teaching when they are available. The University of Exeter is committed to the responsible use of animals in its research and teaching activities. There is high public demand for humane, ethical science, and replacing animals where possible, aligns research and education with these values.

The University recognises importance of good study design, reproducibility, and compliance with funders' terms regarding animal welfare standards. Researchers should always check existing, ethically sourced, data already available which would support the same outcomes.

Scientists at the University of Exeter, in common with many other researchers, are constantly seeking ways to follow the principles of the '3Rs'¹; to **reduce** the number of animals needed for their research and for teaching; **refine** experimental and animal husbandry methods and **replace** animals wherever possible. However, alternative tests are limited, most are in the early stages of development 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 normally require the involvement of the animals themselves. The University's overriding considerations are that:

- Research involving animals is carried out only when it is expected to advance knowledge that can improve the health and welfare of animals, humans, or the environment and its ecosystems, or when it contributes to a deeper scientific understanding of the animals themselves.
- Our research involving animals is undertaken with the highest standards of animal husbandry and is only conducted when there are no feasible alternatives.

¹ <https://nc3rs.org.uk/>

- The University conducts studies involving animals on the basis of well justified scientific objectives, giving due consideration to the welfare of the animals, minimising the number of animals, 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.

Animal research and teaching is underpinned by the 3Rs principles. We are proud in what we do and our values as an institution upholding the 3Rs and include it in everything we do. This should apply to all animal work at the University both for Home Office ASPA regulated animal work and non-ASPA animal work.

Activities involving, working with, studying (including observation) and use of animals and their materials in research, teaching and outreach are subject to formal ethical review at the University. For research that falls under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) and requires a Home Office Project Licence to be held at the University of Exeter, it is reviewed by the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Board (AWERB). The policy of the University of Exeter is to adhere to high standards of humane care and treatment of those animals. We are committed to ensuring an excellent culture of care when conducting research with animals under ASPA, which is underpinned by the principles of the '3Rs'. The University of Exeter endorse the [ARRIVE guidelines](#) and supports the expectations outlined in the [Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research](#)

Compliance of research regulated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA)² 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 animals obtained by the University for research regulated under ASPA are subject to inspection and approval by the University's Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer(s) 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. 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.

Animals regulated under ASPA 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. All regulated animal facilities meet and exceed the requirements of the ASPA Code of Practice (CoP)³ and our UoE Estates Team ensure all environmental requirements under the CoP are met. 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.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-and-care-of-animals-bred-supplied-or-used-for-scientific-purposes>

Upholding the 3Rs will also improve environmental and economic sustainability by reducing the number of animals we have in facilities where possible and enabling long-term sustainability of animal populations we do have, which when housing animals at the University means reducing the treatment and disposal of biological waste, and reducing the quantity of energy consumed by research animal facilities.

In addition, the University's Sustainable Development Goals, aim to embed sustainability into university culture and achieve our sustainability commitments, which includes animals in [Nature and biodiversity](#).

We are signatories to the [Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK](#). This means we must be as transparent as possible in how we conduct animal research which is regulated under ASPA and have an obligation in providing reassurance to the public that we are using animals responsibly and with high standards of animal welfare. We must be open, transparent, and accountable for the research that we conduct or support. We have a public facing [Animals in Research](#) webpage.

Animal activities which do not involve procedures regulated under ASPA at the University but involve working with, studying (including observation) and use of animals and their materials in research, teaching and outreach (for example, observational field studies on wild animals or studies involving species of invertebrates) are conducted within relevant legislative requirements and reviewed by Research Ethics Committees and NACWOs who will assess the 3Rs and welfare of the animals and can include additional AWERB review if required.