

University of Cambridge

Animal Welfare Policy

The University of Cambridge considers that research with animals is not taken for granted but must be earned by demonstration of our staff's commitment to achieving the highest standards of animal welfare and an ongoing commitment to replacement, reduction and refinement – the 3Rs.

The University of Cambridge recognises that research with animals has made, and for some aspects of research, currently continues to make, an important contribution to the treatment and cure of human and animal diseases.

Regulation and Ethics of Animal Research at Cambridge

Across the UK research with animals is governed by a range of legislation, including the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA)¹. There are three levels of licencing that must be in place before any animal research is conducted, which ensure that the individual completing the research is competent to work with animals and has all the required training; that the programme of work proposed will yield benefits outweighing the harms, and that the places where the research will be carried out are safe and appropriate for the animals. This means abiding by the standards set out in the Codes of Practice for housing and care of animals in research². The Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU)³ is responsible for implementing ASPA. If there is deviation from any of these requirements the University of Cambridge ensures prompt and open reporting of these adverse outcomes to ASRU.

All project licences are subject to robust scrutiny by the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB). The AWERB committees are tasked with the review of project licences and have memberships consisting of lay members, veterinary surgeons, animal care staff and academic staff. Lay members and specialist scientists may be drawn from outside of the University of Cambridge to ensure adequate review. Only where a programme of animal research is necessary and justified with due consideration to the 3Rs will it continue the process towards being approved.

Under ASPA the University is required to employ a number of different Named Persons. These include:

- **Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS):** Advise on the health and welfare of the animals used in research. The University of Cambridge employs a team of NVSs who are available to be contacted at any time to provide care and advice.
- **Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO):** The University of Cambridge employs a large team of NACWOs who ensure animals are transported, housed and cared for by dedicated and appropriately trained staff under professional supervision in a manner designed to maximise health and wellbeing of the animals, with provisions for environmental enrichment.
- **Named Training and Competency Officer (NTCO):** Ensure that all those working with animals have appropriate training and supervision to undertake the tasks required and that they remain competent at these tasks. There are a team of NTCOs at the University of Cambridge.
- **Named Information Officer (NIO):** Proactively work to find and disseminate 3Rs information to all those working at the establishment and facilitate connections to allow

relevant skills to be shared. They are embedded into many different committees at the University of Cambridge.

3Rs at Cambridge

Replacement is the use of non-animal alternatives in place of using animals. The University of Cambridge actively strives to replace all animals used in research with other techniques. Examples of this include using cell cultures, 'organ on a chip' models and computational modelling.

Reduction is the practice of using as few animals as possible while still ensuring that data collected is valid, so that animals are not wasted. The University of Cambridge has processes in place that actively encourage sharing of animals and animal tissues between scientists to ensure that the most information can be gained from the fewest animals for example if there are ever surplus animals available. Wherever possible and feasible rehoming of animals in our care is investigated and supported.

Finally, the animal experience is refined to cause the least harm and distress to them as possible. At every opportunity practices are reviewed to improve the animal experience. For example, the University encourages taking small blood samples from a superficial blood vessel in the leg rather than from the tail of rodents. This requires a less stressful restraint for the animal, reducing the distress they experience.

Promoting Good Research Practice at Cambridge

The University of Cambridge expects everyone involved in animal research to follow the Laboratory Animal Science Association [LASA] guiding principles⁴ as set out in their published documents, apply the use of analgesia and anaesthetic regimes together with maintaining a robust welfare ethos and strongly encourages using non-aversive training and testing methods. All experiments using animals should be carefully designed and conducted in line with the principles set out in the PREPARE guidelines⁵ and data published in accordance with the ARRIVE guidelines⁶. Wherever possible negative data should be published thereby reducing the risk of experiments being repeated unnecessarily by others.

The University of Cambridge is a signatory and Leader of the Concordat on Openness and therefore aims to be as open as possible about the use of animals in research and abide by the 4 key commitments laid out in the Concordat⁷.

Where research involving animals does not fall under the legislation as described above our responsibilities will extend to ensure this research is also undertaken with full consideration of our robust ethical justification and animal welfare.

References

1. [Animal testing and research: guidance for the regulated community - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-testing-guidance)
2. [Code of practice for the housing and care of animals bred, supplied or used for scientific purposes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-and-care-of-animals-bred-supplied-or-used-for-scientific-purposes)
3. [Animals in Science Regulation Unit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animals-in-science-regulation-unit)
4. www.lasa.co.uk
5. Smith AJ, Clutton RE, Lilley E, Hansen KEA, Brattelid T. PREPARE: guidelines for planning animal research and testing. *Laboratory Animals*. 2018;52(2):135-141. doi:10.1177/0023677217724823
6. [Home | ARRIVE Guidelines](https://arriveguidelines.org/)
7. [Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK | Openness in animal research communications \(concordatopenness.org.uk\)](https://concordatopenness.org.uk/)

Agreed and signed off by Dr M Vinnell and the UBS Director for Governance and Welfare on 29th September 2023 in accordance with 4th July 2023 UBSGSC meeting action.