

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

University Policy on the Use of Animals in Research

Research using animals has played and continues to play a key role in the advancement of biological, biomedical and veterinary science. It has made a vital contribution towards the understanding, prevention, treatment and cure of a wide range of major health problems, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and mental illness. Animal research has also contributed to developing methods for preventing and treating diseases of domestic and farm animals, and for improving their welfare.

The University of Edinburgh uses animals only in research programmes of the highest quality, when their use is justified on scientific, ethical and legal grounds, and when no alternatives are available. All such work is carried out under licences, which are reviewed and approved by the Home Office in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, and are issued only if the potential benefits of the work are likely to outweigh the effects on the animals concerned.

The University of Edinburgh upholds the principles of reduction, refinement and replacement (“the 3 R’s”). For each project, it ensures that the minimum number of animals is used to achieve the scientific objectives. The University is also committed to the development and utilisation of alternatives to animal use, including computer modelling, tissue culture, cell and molecular biology, and research using human subjects. Where the use of animals remains essential, the University ensures that experimental procedures, accommodation and care are refined to maximise welfare, and that a culture of care is sustained.

The welfare of experimental animals at The University of Edinburgh is overseen by an ethical review process. This process considers all proposals for work involving the use of animals in experimental procedures and provides ethical advice on standards of animal welfare, care and accommodation. It includes lay representation from outside the University and from non-scientists within the University, members of the animal care staff, and veterinary staff who are employed specifically for this purpose. The University ensures that researchers who work with animals are aware of their responsibilities and receive appropriate training, including completion of an accredited training course, and ongoing advice and support from the veterinary and animal care staff.

The University of Edinburgh has made major contributions to science and medicine, partly through research conducted using animals. It has progressed the understanding and treatment of disorders such as stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, heart disease, multiple sclerosis and cancer. It has contributed to measures for preventing and treating diseases of third world countries such as malaria and other parasitic diseases. Research involving animals has also helped improve health and welfare of domestic and farm animals, including management of reproductive and respiratory diseases in horses, and provision of improved conditions for transportation and housing of farm animals.

May 2005