

The response reproduced below was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on the ethics of research involving animals during October-December 2003. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Anonymous #1

Q1 What is your view about the use of animals in research?

We think that animals should be used for scientific or medical research only when there is clear justification and objectives such as an expected advance in knowledge or an achievable benefit. This should only be done when no alternatives to animals are available.

Q2 What are your views about the use of genetically modified animals in research?

Our knowledge is limited but we believe that genetically modified animals should be used if/when they permit the objectives of research to be targeted more directly and accurately with an expectation of more reliable and valid results.

Q3 What is your view about the use of alternatives?

We believe that alternatives are only ever likely to replace a stage in or part of the whole research process. Alternatives should be employed whenever possible to replace part(s) of a research programme but it is naive to expect that alternatives can be used to replace all aspects of animal research. Also we believe that the transition from initial research using alternatives to animals direct to application of drugs or treatments in man is probably too great a step and not without risk. We are convinced that in many cases the use of animals for research forms an unfortunate but necessary stage in the assessment and validation process for drugs and therapies.

Q4 What is your view about ethical issues relating to the use of animals in research?

Ethical issues should be seriously addressed, by all parties concerned/involved, before and throughout the research process because circumstances do not remain static and there may always be opportunities for improvements in animal care, welfare etc. However, this consideration of the ethical use of animals should be undertaken in a framework where the use of animals is acknowledged, accepted and supported.

Q5 What is your view about the UK regulations on research involving animals in the UK?

We think that UK regulations have done a considerable amount to directly address the ethical issues inherent in animal research and that this has been

a positive achievement but unfortunately legislation/regulation will never be able to address or satisfy all perspectives or opinions.

We believe that there is a significant risk, in trying to satisfy those opposed to animal research, of understating the benefits we gain from such research. Ultimately we believe that if regulation becomes too extensive and bureaucratic this will force animal research elsewhere, eg to countries where the ethical use of animals is of far less interest or concern (and surely this would be a negative outcome). We urge that the legislative and regulatory processes should account for the global picture and do more to provide support for research and offer an enabling rather than restrictive environment for those seeking to bring benefits through animal research.

Q6 What do you think about the information that is available to the public about research involving animals?

We think that it is very important to educate and advise the general public about the general principles of work being undertaken, about objectives, potential benefits and about achievements already made (which are largely taken for granted and in most cases not attributed to animal research). However, it is vitally important that the individuals and establishments concerned should be protected from extremist elements and the threats which they present. Until such extremists can be controlled, we do not think it is reasonable to release detailed information on proposed or ongoing research, which by inference and association, may be identified to a particular individual, organisation or group. We are absolutely convinced that the public's 'right' to know should not override an individual's personal security and safety.