

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.

This response was submitted using the online facility:

Anonymous #3

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

1. Background: the use of animals in research

ANSWER:

I think that animal research could possibly provide some information that is not available by any other method. However, in-vitro and cell-culture substitutes might be a better alternative. One problem is that, many times, research on animals has proved to be totally ineffective when applied to humans because of differences in metabolic pathways, e.g. rats are not the same type of animal as humans, nor remotely related. Penicillin was found to kill guinea pigs, so if the results of that research had been applied to humans, we could never have benefitted. Pigs and primates are extremely close. The purpose of research may justify some experiments. I am concerned about all experimentation. It is certain the notorious Draize test has no justification whatsoever (See Journal of Chemistry and Industry, 16 Mar, 1992, No.6 pp.193-232). There is also the notorious Porton Down experiment blinding monkeys with laser beams (photographed by Animal Amnesty). Re anaesthetising: a recent case showed that an experienced vivisector, Dr Wilhelm Feldberg (photographed courtesy of Action for Animals) had, through age alone, become careless in making sure that animals were properly anaesthetised, and a rabbit was filmed regaining consciousness, despite which, he carried on. The vivisector subsequently yielded up his licence. Octopi and quails are, I believe, classed as sentient beings, and some creatures have highly advanced nervous systems, despite being small and not far up the evolutionary chain. With regard to the Georgy Markov case, Prof. Rufus Crompton, the Home Office Pathologist, sent the ricin-filled pellet from Markov's leg to Porton Down to determine the cause of death. This was in spite of **the fact that the Eastern-bloc origins of the pellet implied, not just a pre-meditated crime, but one in which the perpetrator was unlikely ever to be brought to justice.** a pig was needlessly destroyed, despite the virtual certainty that Markov's symptoms were of ricin poisoning. It vomited and haemorrhaged. I think this is disgusting, and I've considered writing to Prof. Crompton about it.

2. Genetically modified animals

ANSWER:

I think the creation of transgenic animals is wholly unacceptable. This is a quote from a newspaper which I cannot recall '...almost every animal has had something wrong.' This can range from unnaturally shortened lives to hideous deformities. Scientists themselves are disturbed by the creation of such creatures as the 'oncomouse' which will later develop cancer. This is objectionable on moral grounds as it is adding to the sum total of suffering in the world, not relieving it. I also think the use of animals to produce drugs in their milk could lead to unforeseen health problems in humans.

3. Alternatives

ANSWER:

Yes, I feel alternatives should be used wherever possible to avoid using animals.

4. Ethical issues

ANSWER:

I don't think animal suffering is justifiable; moreover, some crustaceans and squid, have highly-evolved nervous systems similar to our own.

5. The regulations

ANSWER:

Totally unacceptable. I find it utterly abhorrent that things have been allowed to go on for so long, unchecked. I believe the Government has not stopped a lot of it because of military implications.

6: Providing information to the public

ANSWER:

I would not trust any Government department to provide unbiased information about anything. Nor is it possible to get unbiased information from drug companies marketing products in an increasingly hostile environment, nor from vivisectionists (who only see the benefits). I would need to know whether a procedure was invasive, mildly irritant, etc. I think specialist library books about animal experimentation - such as those in pharmaceutical research establishments - should be on the shelves of public libraries. I think information should be given as to whether a product was recently researched using animals, or whether the ingredients were tested a long time ago.