

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.

Dr Richard Twine, Research Associate, Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy (IEPPP), Lancaster University

## **QUESTIONS ANSWERED:**

### **1. Background: the use of animals in research**

#### **ANSWER:**

Yes it provides information about that particular animal's physiology and physiological response. Yes they can but not without risk. These two questions clearly depend upon the moral status and ethical significance you attribute to other sentient animals. Big killers such as HIV and cancer one may argue could justify animal experimentation and animal suffering if they could lead to a cure. However, it is important not to ethically foreclose both expenditure on prevention and on non-animal research. I would imagine that animals suffer a great deal during research, both psychologically and physiologically, although on the latter point this depends on the actual invasiveness of the procedures involved. The infliction of any suffering is unacceptable, unless the procedures involved were for researching 'big killers' and all other alternatives had been exhausted - this also assumes it should be said the transferability of results to the human, which is not a given.

### **2. Genetically modified animals**

#### **ANSWER:**

GM animals raise new issues. Specifically these relate to the promethean point of humans 'creating' new species using genomic techniques which distinguish them from past selective breeding hybrids. Genes can be swapped now between radically different specie sub-sets. This is new. Second, they raise further issues of commodification: Should we modify animals to make them more economically productive? Discourses of 'natural' and 'unnatural' provide dubious grounds from which to stand within an ethical argument. However, in this case you could express GM animals as 'unnatural' in that they radically disrupt the temporality and gene transfer observed in pre-existing natural/cultural processes of evolution. Yes. No animals need be created. The onus is on scientists to argue the case for their creation. This is not justifiable. It represents an extreme instrumentalisation and there are alternatives to investigating neuro-degeneration. The most controversial areas I think, will be modifying animals to make them more economically productive, and the creation of animal-human hybrids. Xenotransplantation remains controversial but solely because it is such a bad idea both scientifically and ethically. All the money wasted on this could have been spent (at a fraction of the cost) on the introduction of a 'presumed consent' scheme for organ donation. No, not in this section.

### **3. Alternatives**

#### **ANSWER:**

Yes, a great need. The Government and EU should take a much more active role here. A significant degree of animal experimentation takes place due to pre-existing social-structural relations in society. For example, if we were primed more to think about prevention, if organic farming was promoted more (this would lessen research into GM animals), and my point re: xenotransplantation in the previous section. Yes I would think this is important. A good method is the open method of online publication, such as

the policy recently adopted by the Wellcome Trust. Better communication between scientists would help too. Yes, my main concerns are the highly instrumentalised language used in such journal papers. Also, I would suggest the following idea (as strange as it may sound to some) that animals should receive thanks and acknowledgement in the paper for the knowledge they have provided/been sacrificed for. Not qualified to answer this question.

#### **4. Ethical issues**

##### **ANSWER:**

Whilst I am sceptical of ranking animals - I think it is clear that there is a moral difference between insects and animals. This does not mean that insects are however insignificant in ecological terms! I cannot think of any. It is odd that ethically we look for differences, but scientifically we stress similarity to validate the experiment!! Such concepts are partially socially constructed, but yes I think we can extend at least the first three. If not, we condemn ourselves to a very outdated Cartesian solipsistic view. Yes. The animal is already suffering on account of being kept in a confined space. It is safe to assume that further medical intervention adds to that suffering. I think these are human concepts. It may not actually be important to extend these to nonhuman animals. Yes, but not invasive research. The ability of the animal to feel pain. It compares in the sense that it represents a common instrumentalised and non respectful view toward other animals. Environmental richness is important for the wellbeing of all animals, human and nonhuman.

#### **5. The regulations**

##### **ANSWER:**

No, there should be better monitoring of both labs and farms. All three phases. Regulations must endeavour to account for this diversity. Yes, and they should be very strict. No, further and more stringent onus must be placed on the applicant to justify the social usefulness of the GM animal. C-B analysis questions. This is a dubious method which I would not want to support.(e.g. See "Cost-Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique." by Steven Kelman (1981), from AEI Journal on Government and Society Regulation) Not necessarily, there is a need to strive for common EU policy. Where this cannot be achieved there is nothing wrong with the UK taking the lead on animals ethics policy.

#### **6: Providing information to the public**

##### **ANSWER:**

Information that shows scientists critiquing the validity of applying the results of animal experimentation to humans. This is scientifically contested and the public should know more about this. A large scale and well conducted public information exercise. Also, web-sites and newspapers, and TV. I'm not sure I'd wholly trust any sources since there are many interests at stake in the debate. But I'd least trust someone speaking from an economically reductionist position. Yes, and a high level of information. This would protect consumers and provide them with information with which to make an ethical

choice.

**Further Comments:**

- I would like to have seen section [question] four given an expanded and more prominent place.

- I would like to have seen more animal ethics, sociologists and anthropologists on the working party. Its composition also seemed to be skewed toward those who were likely to be in favour of animal experimentation.