

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:

Jenny Williams, Australia

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

1. Background: the use of animals in research

ANSWER:

I do not believe that research involving animals provides information that could not be found some other way. There are no circumstances where research involving animals is acceptable. I understand that 60% of animal research is done without anaesthetic. Any level of suffering by animals during research is unacceptable.

2. Genetically modified animals

ANSWER:

Animals should under no circumstances be genetically modified. It is going against nature, is dangerous (for example in xenotransplantation where cross-species virus transmission may occur), and the animals who are subjected to this misery are often born mutated and are in pain and misery however long their lives. I am totally against genetically modified animals and xenotransplantation. It is cruel.

3. Alternatives

ANSWER:

Alternatives to animal testing must be used where available and developed if necessary. I happily pay a little more for what I buy, knowing it has not been tested on animals. Pharmaceutical companies have the finances to investigate alternative testing and have a moral obligation to do so.

4. Ethical issues

ANSWER:

There are no distinctions between the moral status of animals. Each species has a right to live without fear, pain and misery. I have no doubt that all animals "feel" to some extent, eg monkeys kept in small cages, without companions clearly show signs of distress. It is not for humans to decide whether their suffering is "worth it". There is no justification for animal research in any form. There is no reason to undertake research into how animals experience the world, certainly not invasive research. Leave the animals in peace. I am as much against use of animals in sport, for clothing and for food, as medical experimentation. Humans believe they are superior to animals, when, with their deliberate cruelty, they are clearly not.

5. The regulations

ANSWER:

There should be the strictest regulations possible. Welfare assessments (unannounced) should be conducted before and after, but particularly DURING the project. Results should be published and open to view. There is no cost-benefit worth animal experimentation.

6: Providing information to the public

ANSWER:

No information will convince me that animal experimentation is acceptable. All information about animal experimentation/ethics should be available to the public via publications, TV etc. Any medicines developed through animal research, at ANY STAGE of that development, should be labelled at least at the level that the product was developed through use of animals in research. The public has a right to know and to choose whether they do or do not use the product or medicine. Animal researchers who are afraid to go public because of the possibility of targetting by animal rights groups should be ashamed of their work - no wonder they are afraid - they know first hand what torture they put the helpless animals through.