

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.

Wakefield Research Ethics Committee

THE ETHICS OF RESEARCH INVOLVING ANIMALS

I have some concerns re – ‘species connections’. How transferable is info obtained from rodents, pigs, dogs etc. to humans? If the findings have limited relevance precisely because they come from animals is the relevance sufficient to justify the research?

Statistical records evidence a reduction in the number of animals used in research over the last few years – does this in itself suggest the scientists are themselves having difficulties justifying? (Possibly other avenues have provided more meaningful info).

There is a real difference between ‘stress’ and ‘distress’. Arguably there should never be ‘distress’ which I would equate with ‘suffering’.

With specific regard to the genetic modification of animals and in response to the question ‘Are there some types of animals that should never be created’, even accepting the advances that have been made in our knowledge, how can we know? We may not know before the event exactly what the outcome will be and will then have to deal with the consequences. It is **never justified to create an animal to suffer on a long-term basis** e.g. from neurodegenerative diseases. There is something inherently in-human in creating something to suffer and then watching it suffer.

A genetically modified animal ‘X’ may be species ‘faulty’ or ‘weak’. There would appear to be real problems in ‘risking’ the perpetuation of animal ‘Xs’.

I consider there is a need for more research into alternatives to research involving animals - that this should be funded by the Government and, if appropriate, the pharmaceutical companies.

The reporting in scientific journals all too often portrays animals as research ‘objects’. Accepting the vulnerability of an animal – it is at the mercy of the researcher- it is a life form and should, without sentiment, be treated with the greatest of respect. Arguably, acceptance of the ‘*theory of evolution*’ would appear to suggest that some life forms are more/less worthy of respect but ‘respect’ nonetheless.

It is possible to judge the extent to which an animal is suffering by close observation of it’s responses (comparison with periods before after and against members of it’s species group). Brain activity certainly has some relevance.

The environment within which **any** living thing is kept has a significant impact on it's overall health and well being.

Assuming animal research can be justified as **the only** possible way forward then every care should be taken to provide as distress free an environment as possible with, at all times, respect for the animal paramount.

Under no circumstances should a human being seek to create a living thing to suffer and then observe it suffering. Ends do not, of themselves, justify means. **Animal research requires very careful licensing and vigilant monitoring to safeguard the mental health and physical well being of all involved including the researcher.**