



Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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23 August 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 26 July to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on behalf of a number of your constituents regarding a parliamentary debate on animal testing, MBR Acres and the use of dogs in science. Your email has been forwarded to the Home Office and I am replying as the Minister with policy responsibility for the regulation of the use of animals in science.

The use of animals in science supports the development of new medicines and cutting-edge medical technologies, for humans and animals, as well as supporting the safety and sustainability of our environment. Animal research has helped us to make life-changing discoveries, from new vaccines and medicines to transplant procedures, anaesthetics, and blood transfusions. Animal models have validity as an opportunity to understand pathways that are similar to those in humans and to provide an integration of whole system effects that cannot be gained from current non-animal methods.

Where animals have to be used the Government is clear that these animals must be protected. The legal framework in the UK ensures that animals are only ever used in science where there are no alternatives, where the number of animals used is the minimum needed to achieve the scientific benefit, and where the potential harm to animals is limited to that needed to achieve the scientific benefit.

The UK regulatory framework has a rigorous approach to the application of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) in all applications for programmes of work involving animals. Establishments conducting research must have robust internal governance systems and processes that ensure the regulated activities carried out at the establishment are undertaken in accordance with the principles of the 3Rs.

The use of animals in science is highly regulated and includes a three-tier system of licensing; which licenses each establishment, project, and individual involved in performing regulated procedures involving animals. All establishments are required to have dedicated individuals including veterinary surgeons with legal responsibilities for the care and welfare of animals, and an ethical review body, which reviews any proposals for the use of animals and promotes the 3Rs of animal use. The UK regulator conducts an integrated assessment of the compliance of all licence holders including on-site inspections. The Home Office has published and enforces standards for the care and accommodation of all animals bred, supplied or used for scientific purposes.

Our application of the 3Rs principles continuously evolves with scientific developments, including new approaches that do not use animals. The Government continues to actively support and fund the development and dissemination of the 3Rs. This is achieved through UK Research and Innovation who fund the National Centre for the 3Rs and research into the development of alternatives through Innovate UK, the Medical Research Council, and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

The Government is clear that the use of animals in science is justified, for the benefits it brings to human, animal and environmental health and safety. Alongside this, the Government supports the replacement, reduction and refinement of the use of animals in science – principles that remain valid. The existing legislative and regulatory frameworks provide an appropriate delivery of these two objectives.

Your constituents raised some specific concerns about MBR Acres. All establishments licensed to breed or supply animals, or to carry out regulated procedures on animals, in Great Britain are subject to the full requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA). This provides for a regulatory regimen of activities that protects animals in science. A published Code of Practice provides minimum requirements for the care and accommodation of animals used in science, including dogs. The Code of Practice can be viewed here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-and-care-of-animals-bred-supplied-or-used-for-scientific-purposes.

I can confirm that both announced and unannounced site visits are undertaken by the Home Office Regulator to assure compliance and inspect the welfare, health, and environment of animals at all establishments.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Baroness Williams of Trafford