

## The use of animals in research (October 2008)

The Biochemical Society is committed to the replacement, refinement and reduction of animals in research and supports initiatives such as the National Centre for the 3Rs that promote the development of alternative methods.

Most of us have, at some stage of our lives, benefited from the use of animals in research. Virtually every medical achievement has directly or indirectly required testing on animals. The developments of prescription medicines, vaccinations and techniques have greatly improved our livelihoods and all have required the use of animals in experimentation. Many biochemists will carry out experiments on animals, or materials derived from animals at some point in their careers.

Despite arguments from animal rights campaigners that animal experimentation is useless because animals are so different from humans, animals that are used in research actually share many diseases with humans and substantial proportions of our genetic material and basic biochemistry. Many key areas of scientific enquiry can only be investigated by using animals and much of that research goes toward improving veterinary science also. This makes the use of animals a necessary and unavoidable aspect of scientific research and the development of both human and veterinary medicines.

Because of the crucial role that animals play in biosciences research, the Biochemical Society is committed to supporting the highest standards of welfare for the animals we use, not only for ethical reasons, but also to ensure that biochemists are able to carry out their research to the highest possible standards. In the UK this endeavour is supported by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, providing some of the most rigorous standards of care in the world. Scientists working with animals are required to demonstrate qualifications, training and experience in order to obtain a Project Licence and research institutes are subject to regular unannounced checks by Home Office Officials.