

Dr Hadwen Trust: Statistics reveal 42 per cent rise in Scotland's animal experiments. Urgent action on alternatives needed, says the charity



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Home Office figures reveal that in 2008, Scotland carried out 555,567 experiments on 544,949 individual animals [1], a massive 42% increase since 2007 and making up 15% of Britain's total animal experiments [2]. The UK's leading non-animal medical research charity, the Dr Hadwen Trust for Humane Research, says urgent action on alternatives is needed to reverse the trend and calls for political commitment to a "roadmap" to replace animal experiments.

Scotland's animal experiments statistics summary:

The majority of increases occurred in experiments on fish (258% rise to 184,335), birds (38% rise to 6193), amphibians (345% rise to 383), mice (12% rise to 290,081), hamsters (56% rise to 688) and pigs (16% rise to 883).

The number of non-human primates used decreased slightly – a 2% decrease to 929 monkeys overall.

Number of animals used in Scotland's experiments 2008

- 290,081 mice
- 49,009 rats,
- 2,428 guinea pigs
- 688 hamsters

- 2,571 rabbits
- 9 horses and other equids
- 4,802 sheep
- 883 pigs
- 6,193 birds
- 383 amphibians
- 184,335 fish
- 8 cats
- 994 dogs
- 30 new world primates (monkeys)
- 899 old world primates (monkeys)
- Fundamental and applied studies (non-toxicological purposes) - 500,133 procedures (90% of total.)
- Toxicological purposes - 55,434 procedures (10%).
- Of the total 555,567 procedures in Scotland, 417,734 or 75% were carried out at Universities or Medical Schools, 26,823 or 5% at Government Departments, 52,100 or 9% at other public bodies, and 58,910 or 11% at commercial organisations.
- Procedures using genetically modified animals rose by 17% - 32% of all procedures in Scotland. Huge increase of 26% of procedures using animals with a harmful genetic defect.
- 376,937 (68%) of all procedures used no form of anaesthesia, a 50% increase from 2007.

The Dr Hadwen Trust for Humane Research funds cutting-edge research into human diseases at universities across Britain but all without animal experiments. Our projects aim to replace the use of animals in medical research and by so doing, improve the relevance and quality of research into debilitating conditions such as multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, breast cancer and brain disorders.

“The Scottish public will be dismayed to learn of such a sharp rise in the number of animals being used in experiments in Scottish laboratories.” says Dr Sebastien Farnaud, Science Director for the Dr Hadwen Trust. “Although the British government claims to be committed to promoting non-animal research and ultimately replacing animals, it has so far failed to

implement meaningful action and with such unacceptably high animal use figures, clearly the time has come for a national strategy on alternatives. Excellence in medical research can and should be pursued without animal suffering not just because it's morally right to do so but crucially because animal experiments so often fail to deliver results that are reliable or relevant to humans. We urgently need political commitment to a targeted and time-tabled 'roadmap to replacement' so that Scotland along with the rest of Britain can start to see a genuine long-term decline in laboratory animal numbers and an increase in better quality medical research."

The Dr Hadwen Trust believes that Scotland could have a crucial role to play in replacing animal experiments.

"Because the government doesn't implement a targeted approach to replacing animals, we have no overall trend of decline; one year the figures increase, the next they decrease without any real progress being made." says Dr Farnaud "It's time for that to change and Scotland could play a significant role despite animal experiments not being a devolved issue. Currently Scotland conducts a massive 15% of Britain's total animal experiments. If Scottish politicians took decisive action to encourage universities and research establishments to energetically pursue a drive to develop more non-animal replacements techniques, that could have a dramatic and positive impact."

Scotland has some of the UK 's largest contract testing companies such as Quintiles Ltd in Edinburgh which tests products on a large range of animals such as mice, rats, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits and dogs; and Inveresk, also in Edinburgh which tests consumer, agricultural/industrial and pharmaceutical products(3).

ENDS

1. Written answers Oct 12 and 15 2009 to Parliamentary Questions by Katy Clark MP. The total number of animal experiments started in the UK in 2009 was 3.656 million – a 22 year high.
2. The Dr Hadwen Trust is currently committed to £1.5 million of non-animal medical research. www.drhadwentrust.org
3. www.quintiles.com and www.inveresk.com