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Study shows steady decline in use of animals for lab testing in Israel

Number of animals used for lab tests down nine percent in past year; been steadily dropping since 2007, stats show.

By **Ilan Lior**

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Laboratory experiments were performed on 286,000 animals in 2010 - some 9 percent down on the 2009 figure, according to data released by the National Council for Experimentation on Animal Subjects.

According to the council figures, the number of experiments performed on animals in Israel has steadily dropped since 2007, when a record 340,000-plus animals underwent laboratory testing. Of the animals on which experiments were carried out last year, around 63 percent were laboratory mice, 18 percent rats, 9 percent chickens and 6 percent were fish. The remainder of the experiments, less than five percent, involved rabbits (about 2,000), pigs (1,400), bats (110), dogs (45), primates (33), cats (25) horses (10) and a single snake.



Instead of keeping their knowledge secret until publication for fear of losing funds or prestige, scientists now unite resources and information.

Photo by: Bloomberg

The council, which supervises the issue for the Ministry of Health, reported that 43.5 percent of these experiments were for "basic scientific research," 42.5 percent for the purposes of "health and medicine," 11 percent for "the testing or manufacture of objects or materials" and 3 percent for "educational and instructional purposes."

Permits were issued for experiments on 561,000 animal subjects, but nearly half of the permits were not utilized, mainly due to difficulties in obtaining funding.

Animal experiments are classified according to the amount of suffering they cause to their subjects, on a scale from one to five. About 11 percent of last year's experiments were rated five, causing the most suffering, with 34 percent at level four and 31 percent rated three. The council's figures do not include experiments on animals that were put to death prior to the use of their bodies, nor do they include animal experiments carried out by the defense establishment.

The chairwoman of the Behind Closed Doors animal-rights organization, Anat Refua, admitted that she was pleasantly surprised by the figures for 2010. "Experiments using live animals are bad, archaic and barbaric science that destroys human morality and needlessly hurts both animals and human beings," Refua said. "As someone who has been

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...significant - 30,000 fewer animals than last year, that means 30,000
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...souls that were saved, Refua said.
...the real...
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...A state comptroller's report issued two months ago noted serious
...oversights in the supervision of animal experimentation in Israel. The
...report noted that the national council did not act to introduce proper
...procedures for its own operation, and that in the 17 years since its
...establishment, it had discussed alternatives to animal experiments just
...once.

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The State Comptroller's Office also found that many of the subjects of animal experiments are needlessly put to death when the experiment is completed and implied that the reasons for this were financial.



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