

Policy on the use of animals in scientific research



Introduction

Brain Research UK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and, in common with other members of the AMRC, we support the principle of using animals in research when it is necessary to advance understanding of neurological conditions to develop better treatments and when there is no alternative.

We understand that people have concerns about the use of animals in research and it is not something that we take lightly. We share concerns about the welfare of animals and we only fund high quality research that has been peer-reviewed by experts, where the potential impact is significant and where there is no alternative.

Whilst recognising the sensitivities around the use of animals in research, we aim to be open and transparent about this aspect of our work.

Regulation

All research carried out in the UK involving animals is tightly regulated by the Home Office under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA). Under the ASPA, three licences are required before any testing on animals is permitted:

- a personal licence for each person carrying out procedures on animals;
- a project licence for the programme of work; and
- an establishment licence for the place at which the work is carried out.

We require copies of these licences before funding is released.

The ASPA also requires that licence-holders apply a set of principles called the 3Rs:

- Replacement: consider methods or techniques that avoid or replace the use of animals
- Reduction: consider methods that minimise the number of animals used per experiment
- Refinement: consider methods that minimise animal suffering and improve welfare.

Our processes

Our application forms contain a dedicated section for researchers to explain and justify the use of animals in their proposed research, including how they have addressed the 3Rs. Our external reviewers and members of our Scientific Advisory Panel specifically address this information when assessing proposals.

We refer applicants to the extensive range of resources available from the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs), to help guide the design and implementation of research involving the use of animals (<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/resource-hubs>). In particular, we recommend that applicants utilise the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA), a free online tool from the NC3Rs, designed to guide researchers through the design of their experiments, helping to ensure that they use the minimum number of animals consistent with their scientific objectives, methods to reduce subjective bias, and appropriate statistical analysis.

Queries

If you have any queries about the use of animals in our research, please contact our research team research@brainresearchuk.org.uk