

## **OIE - World Organization for Animal Health**

### **Animal Experimentation**

#### **Introduction**

Animal experimentation is a method of conducting scientific research on animals with the goal of applying the knowledge gained to benefit humans. Some animals commonly used for testing are rats, mice, rabbits, pigs, and non-human primates because they tend to react similarly to humans to the given experiments.<sup>1</sup> While animal experimentation has conjured major scientific achievements that improve human lives in countless ways, some argue that this experimentation is unethical toward animals. This committee will attempt to create solutions that protect the rights of animals without sacrificing this opportunity for scientific advancement.

#### **World Organization for Animal Health**

The World Organization for Animal Health was founded in 1924 as the Office International des Epizooties. While not part of the UN, the OIE is an international organization with the goal of “transparently disseminating information on animal diseases, improving animal health globally and thus building a safer, healthier and more sustainable world.”<sup>2</sup>

The OIE expresses their stance on animal experimentation in Chapter 7.8 of their Terrestrial Code, a document that outlines standards for the improvement of animal health and welfare.<sup>3</sup> This specific chapter, entitled “Use of animals in research and education,” outlines that the OIE recognizes the use of animals for these purposes as valid, but recommends that certain standards and practices be applied in order to ensure that animals are treated humanely in the process.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Animals used for experimentation.” *PETA*. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/>

<sup>2</sup> “Who We Are.” *World Organization for Animal Health*. <https://www.woah.org/en/who-we-are/>

<sup>3</sup> “Codes and Manuals.” *World Organization for Animal Health*. <https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/#ui-id-1>

<sup>4</sup> Preamble. Terrestrial Code 7.8.

[https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/?id=169&L=1&htmlfile=chapitre\\_aw\\_research\\_education.htm](https://www.woah.org/en/what-we-do/standards/codes-and-manuals/terrestrial-code-online-access/?id=169&L=1&htmlfile=chapitre_aw_research_education.htm)

### *The Three Rs*

This Terrestrial Code chapter advises that research conducted on animals should meet the criteria listed in the Three Rs as closely as possible. These criteria are as follows:

1. Replacement: using cells, tissues, or organs of animals in place of live animals, or materials that do not come from animals at all
2. Reduction: using the smallest amount of animals possible to achieve one's aims
3. Refinement: using methods that cause the least harm possible to the animals used

### **Types of Experimentation on Animals**

Animal experimentation can be divided into three categories: cosmetic, pharmaceutical, and psychological. Cosmetic experimentation is when non-medical products, such as make-up and shampoo, are tested on animals to see how harmful they are.<sup>5</sup> Pharmaceutical experimentation tests medical products such as vaccines and other drugs, looking for effectiveness and possible harm.<sup>6</sup> Psychological experimentation studies the behaviour of animals in different environments.<sup>7</sup> For example, scientists tested how elephants work as a team in this clip.<sup>8</sup> Pharmaceutical and psychological experimentation sometimes look for results that are applicable to humans, but other times they only intend to apply the information to those same animals.

### **Positives and negatives**

The crux of the debate of whether and when to test on animals depends on a fundamental disagreement of whether animal well-being is as important as human wellbeing. Animal rights activists and organizations, such as the American lobby group PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), advocate that all ethical considerations given to human beings should be extended to *all* beings.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, scientific researchers may argue that the minimal

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<sup>5</sup> Tarrant, Tavleen. "10 states have now banned the sale of cosmetics tested on animals." *CNN*. 18 December 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/18/us/new-york-state-bans-cosmetics-animal-testing/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> "Animals used in research." *Pfizer*. <https://www.pfizer.com/science/clinical-trials/integrity-and-transparency/animals-used-in-research>

<sup>7</sup> Capitanio, John. "Animal studies in psychology." *Psychology Student Network*. January 1, 2017. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2017/01/animal-studies>  
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<sup>8</sup> Ribas, Jorge. Elephants Show Cooperation on Test. *Discovery*. March 7, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXcRw6Piaj8>

<sup>9</sup> "What PETA really stands for." *PETA*. <https://www.peta.org/features/what-peta-really-stands-for/>

suffering animals experience while being tested upon is a small price to pay for medical discoveries that could go on to improve the lives of both humans and animals in the future.

### *Positives of Animal Experimentation*

Animal experimentation is an essential step in the process of getting a medical or cosmetic product approved for consumer use. In Canada, for example, after scientists isolate and purify a new substance to potentially use in a drug, they must test it on live animals in two rounds of testing before submitting it to the Health Products and Food Branch of Health Canada for approval. Sometimes tissue cultures are used in place of animals in the first round of testing, but this is not always possible.<sup>10</sup>

Many lifesaving treatments were developed using animal experimentation. For example, the innovative technology of Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA vaccines against COVID-19 were developed by injecting versions of it into mice and non-human primates to understand their antibody response.<sup>11</sup>

Humans are not the only ones who reap the benefits of animal experimentation. Much of the research done on animals is applicable to humans as well. Animals can suffer from many of the same ailments as humans, such as cancer and heart disease, so treatments for these diseases found through animal testing can often be used on both humans and animals once developed.<sup>12</sup>

### *Negatives of Animal Experimentation*

Despite the many beneficial uses of animal testing, those who afford animals as much ethical consideration as humans will always consider it unethical to force animals to undergo any form of pain or harm for the benefit of humans. This is especially egregious for cosmetic products, which have no concrete benefits to human lives.

Additionally, PETA points to cases where results from animal experimentation were unreliable in predicting the effects of the given drug on humans. In one case, of the 85 vaccines

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<sup>10</sup> "How drugs are reviewed in Canada." Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/fact-sheets/drugs-reviewed-canada.html>

<sup>11</sup> National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. "The Important Role of Animal Research in mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine Development." August 18, 2021. <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/news-events/role-animal-research-mrna-covid-19-vaccine-development>.

<sup>12</sup> European Animal Research Association. "The benefits of animal research to animals." 2022. <https://www.eara.eu/animal-research-and-veterinary-medicine#:~:text=to%20animals&text=Animal%20research%20helps%20understand%20biological,for%20humans%20and%20animals%20alike>.

developed against HIV/AIDS that successfully prevented the disease in animals, none of them were successful in humans.<sup>13</sup>

### **Alternatives to Experimenting on Animals**

As the first of the Three Rs suggests, it is sometimes possible to replace animals in the testing process with cells, tissues, organs, or computer models so that no live animals are involved. Methods such as these have allowed certain jurisdictions to ban animal testing for cosmetics. In the United States, ten states have taken this measure, the most recent one being New York on December 15, 2022.<sup>14</sup>

While these alternatives are useful for certain cases like cosmetic testing, some tests cannot be replicated on models. Psychological testing on animals can only be done on sentient beings.<sup>15</sup> The ability to observe a live animal's reaction is sometimes necessary or desirable for experimenters and cannot always be replicated by models. Even in cases where replacement is possible, it is not always used because it can be more expensive.

### **Conclusion**

We have seen that there are many pros and cons to the use of experimentation on animals. While humans and animals alike can benefit from important discoveries made through animal testing, the animals themselves often have to suffer in the process. As delegates in the OIE, your role is to pass resolutions that suggest solutions to the current situation according to the perspective and goals of your country.

### **Questions to consider**

1. What are your country's current laws on animal experimentation?
2. Are these laws being enforced?
3. Which countries have the same views as your country on the issue?

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<sup>13</sup> PETA. "Facts and Statistics about Animal Testing."

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-experimentation/animals-used-experimentation-factsheets/animal-experiments-overview/>.

<sup>14</sup> Tarrant, Tavleen. "10 states have now banned the sale of cosmetics tested on animals." *CNN*. 18 December 2022.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/18/us/new-york-state-bans-cosmetics-animal-testing/index.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Bedwell, Stacey. "Opinion: Why research using animals is important in psychology." 6 July 2016.

<https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/opinion-why-research-using-animals-important-psychology>

4. What measures can your country take to implement the OIE's recommendations on animal experimentation?
5. Who are the main advocates for and against animal experimentation in your government and general population?

### **Further reading**

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