

Research on Animals

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Definition: What is Research on Animals?

Animals are frequently used for research purposes. They are used for teaching medical students, as experimental subjects for new medical procedures, and as test subjects for new pharmaceuticals.

Animals are a vital part of biomedical research in the United States. Most procedures and drugs in use today started with research on animals.

The Animal Welfare Act of 1966 was established to protect animals. This Act orders that animals used in teaching, testing, and research be cared for and transported humanely.

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) writes the regulations governing programs that use animals in research. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees are set up according to the USDA guidelines to review an institution's research projects that use animals.

The Food and Drug Administration requires animal testing of drugs to be approved for humans and uses the USDA's guidelines for safe use of animal subjects.

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Ethical Issues

Animals used in research are often thought of as needing protection. Here are some commonly raised ethical issues:

- Is it fair to conduct research on animals for human benefit?
- Is causing an animal pain ever justified? Would it ever be okay to inflict a lot of pain? Is there a limit to how much pain is okay?
- Some groups think experimentation with animals is always wrong. What do you think of this position?
- Ethical issues arise around animal research when people disagree on the moral status of an animal. Is an animal life worth the same as a human life?

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Links

The Animal Welfare Information Center website is:

www.nal.usda.gov/awic.

The Humane Society of the United States features a section, Animals in Research, online at http://www.hsus.org/animals_in_research/.

A nonprofit website that provides assistance to Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees is:

www.iacuc.org.

The website for the Institute for Animal Laboratory Research (ILAR), a leading source for science based animal research guidelines and information, is: http://dels.nas.edu/ilar_n/ilarhome/index.shtml.

Free downloads of all articles published more than one year ago in the Animal Research Journal are available online at: www.edpsciences.org/journal/index.cfm?edpsname=animres.

The American Psychological Association website provides information for the use of animals in psychology research at:

www.apa.org/science/animal2.html.

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Suggested Reading

“Science examines animal suffering”

Morelle, Rebecca. *BBC News* April 4, 2006.

Available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4877410.stm>

Trends in Animal Research

Mukerjee, Madhusree. *Scientific American* February 1997 (86-93).

Available for a fee online at: <http://www.scientificamerican.com>

Animal Experimentation: The Moral Issues

By Robert Baird and Stuart Rosenbaum; Prometheus (1991).

Animal Liberation

By Peter Singer; Ecco (2001).

Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights

By Steven Wise; Perseus (2003).

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Facts & Statistics

U.S. researchers use around 10 million animals a year for research, according to the Office of Technology Assessment.

Most (95%) of the animals used in research are rats and mice.

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