



A 'road map' toward ending severe suffering of laboratory animals

The RSPCA has drawn up a plan that aims to end severe suffering for animals used in research and testing. The road-map has been released in response to changes in EU and UK legislation and has been published in FRAME's scientific journal ATLA.

Until now scientists have not been required to record how many test animals have undergone procedures classified as 'severe', but from 2014 research establishments will have to assess the level of suffering involved for individual animals and report the information along with other annually collected data.

The introduction of *EU Directive 2010/63/EU* and associated updates to the *UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA)* places new emphasis on reducing animal suffering in laboratories. This is known as Refinement, where procedures are designed to cause the least harm to the animals involved.

Placing a legal requirement on researchers to assess levels and publish the information will increase public knowledge of the degree of suffering laboratory animals experience. It will also give scientists the opportunity to review procedures, and ensure the degree of suffering is truly the minimum necessary to extract the data they are trying to obtain.

The new, published information will then enable regulators, welfare groups, alternatives promoters and funding bodies to concentrate on research areas where suffering is most severe, with the aim of reducing pain and distress to laboratory animals.

The RSPCA plan sets out a practical approach for scientists who work with animals, so they can tackle both the cultural and procedural challenges they face. It sets out questions they can ask, and techniques they can use, to develop methods that promote Refinement, and foster an atmosphere in which necessary changes can take place.

Details of the plan are set out in the published paper *A 'Road Map' Toward Ending Severe Suffering of Animals Used in Research and Testing*, by Elliot Lilley, Penny Hawkins and Maggy Jennings of the RSPCA Research Animals Department. (ATLA 42.4 pp. 267-272) It is available to download free from www.atla.org.uk or [the FRAME website](http://the.FRAME.website).

Lead author, Dr Elliot Lilley, a senior scientific officer at the RSPCA, said:

"Any level of suffering is a concern for the RSPCA, but we are particularly concerned about those animals who suffer the most. "The RSPCA's Road Map will both challenge and help the scientific community to do more to end severe suffering. It offers a step by step strategy to help reach the goal that so many people tell us they want to see no more animals experiencing the highest levels of pain or distress.

"We want further and faster progress to be made, which means greater, coordinated efforts from scientists and animal technologists within industry and universities along with regulatory authorities, funding bodies and scientific journals. We urge everyone involved to review the Road Map and consider how they can apply it to their own work."

FRAME

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FRAME is the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments.

It promotes the replacement of laboratory animals with non-animal methods, through better science.

Its ultimate aim is the elimination of the need to use laboratory animals in any kind of scientific or medical procedures.