

Almost 4 million animals experimented on in Great Britain in 2016

Thursday 13 July, 2017

Around 3.87 million live animals were used in scientific procedures in Great Britain last year, as reported by the Home Office today. This represents a decrease in the total number of animals used last year by around 5% (202,000), however the reliability of the annual statistics is under intense scrutiny by animal welfare groups.

While the statistics reveal some information about animal experiments, such as the numbers of each species used, whether the animals were born in the UK or elsewhere, and ranks their suffering from 'mild' to 'severe', little is known about what life is actually like for each of those animals.

Naturewatch Foundation Campaign Manager, Joanna Randall, explains:

"The Government statistics provide basic numbers about animal experiments in Great Britain, but tell us nothing about accommodation, transport, breeding, how animals are treated, and the specific purposes for each experimental procedure. Such information is essential for the caring and concerned British public to be able to fully understand animal experiments, but is illegal to disclose thanks to the Secrecy Clause."

Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 – the so-called 'Secrecy Clause' - makes it an offence punishable by up to two years' imprisonment to disclose certain details about the use of animals for scientific procedures, even if the researchers carrying out the procedures want it to be known.

Scientific bodies, animal welfare groups, and representatives of both major political parties have acknowledged the need to repeal the clause, but the Government is yet to take action.

1,700 procedures involved the testing of household product ingredients last year, but because of section 24, we cannot know what products those ingredients might go into, what animals were tested on for them, or what methods were used to test on them.

The almost 4 million animals used in scientific procedures last year included 3,530 dogs (increased by 125 in 2015), 143 cats, 373 equines, and 2,440 primates (an increase of 206). The vast majority continue to be mice, zebrafish and rats.

Naturewatch Foundation is calling on the new Minister of State with responsibility for animal experiments, Baroness Williams of Trafford to urgently begin the process of repealing section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act so the British public can finally be truly informed about animal experiments.

END

More Information

The Home Office released the National Statistics publication '[Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 2016](#)' on July 13 2017. This publication provides details of scientific procedures performed using live animals during the year 2016.

- There were 3.94 million completed procedures using animals in 2016.
- Around 3.87 million live animals were used in those procedures.
- 76% of the procedures were rated as painful to some degree. Of those, 114 thousand inflicted severe pain, including to 14 dogs, 20 primates and 920 birds.
- 1,700 procedures involved the testing of household product ingredients.

Read Naturewatch Foundation's report on the many delays and failures to repeal the Secrecy Clause, "[Transparency and Animal Experiments: A case for repealing section 24 of the Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986](#)".

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