

Animal charity urges Home Office to acknowledge Britain's forgotten laboratory animals

Thursday 24 April, 2025

The animal welfare charity, Naturewatch Foundation, has launched a new campaign calling on the UK Home

Office to begin reporting on a hidden population of animals in laboratories - those who are bred for research and never used in experiments.

Currently, the UK Government publishes annual figures about animals used in scientific procedures. However, animals who are bred for research but later killed or die without being used in an experiment are omitted from these statistics.

The only time this data has ever been released was for 2017, when it was revealed an additional 1.8 million animals had been bred and not used in British laboratories. However, no such data has been made publicly available since then.

Naturewatch Foundation fears that potentially hundreds of thousands of additional animals are bred behind closed doors, completely unaccounted for in official figures. The charity is urging the Home Office to start routinely collecting and publishing this data, in line with transparency standards adopted in the EU.

A spokesperson for Naturewatch Foundation said, "The British public is rightly concerned about the use of animals in experiments, but many people will be shocked to learn that even more animals are confined and killed in labs each year without being used in experiments and without anyone even knowing about them. Every animal's life matters and it's unacceptable that these sentient animals are completely invisible."

In the EU, the number of animals bred and not used is reported every five years. In 2022, over 18.8 million animals were either used in experiments or bred for research across the 27 EU member states and Norway, with just as many animals being bred and not used as those used in procedures. This included over 7.6 million mice, over 6,000 hamsters, 304 dogs, 211 equines and 44 baboons.

Reasons for animals being bred and not used include them being the wrong sex for a study, being used for breeding or tissue collection, being bred as surplus to ensure availability, or them dying before procedures took place.

Naturewatch Foundation has written to the Home Office urging them to start recording and reporting this information. The charity is also calling on members of the public to help by contacting their MPs about the issue.

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For further information please contact:

Media queries:

Alice Williamson
Campaigns & Marketing Assistant
Naturewatch Foundation
alice@naturewatch.org
+44 (0) 1242 252 871

Campaign queries:

Natalie Harney
Campaign Manager
Naturewatch Foundation
natalie.harney@naturewatch.org
+44 (0) 1242 252 871

About Naturewatch Foundation: Naturewatch Foundation is a UK-based animal welfare charity dedicated to ending cruelty and improving the lives of animals through campaigning, education and advocacy. For over 30 years, the charity has led initiatives to tackle illegal and unethical practices, including puppy

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farming, animal experiments and wildlife crime. By working with policymakers, enforcement agencies and the public, Naturewatch Foundation strives to make the world a kinder place for animals. Visit naturewatch.org to find out more.

Notes for editors

? The Home Office releases annual statistics about animals used in scientific procedures in Britain at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals>. The latest figures relate to 2023 and report that 2,681,686 scientific procedures were carried out on animals and 2,605,528 animals were used in procedures for the first time in that year.

? Additional statistics released about 2017 report the number of animals bred and not used in Britain at ht

? In the EU, additional statistics about the number of animals bred and not used is reported every five years. The latest available data related to 2022 is available at https://d8aaf127-0203-427a-b8b6-1f1b942cd1af.usrfiles.com/ugd/d8aaf1_3673afd6252b4ebe824da451eb1f8c53.pdf. In 2022, 9,572,759 animals were bred and killed without being used in procedures in the EU's 27 nations and Norway. 9,237,542 animals were used in scientific procedures. The total number of animals used in 2022 in the EU and Norway was 18,810,301.

? More information about Naturewatch Foundations' Forgotten Lives campaign can be found at <https://naturewatch.org/campaigns/animal-experiments/forgotten-animals-in-laboratories/>. Members of the public can support the campaign by using the charity's template letter to contact their MP at <https://action.naturewatch.org/speak-up-for-forgotten-lives>.

? 24th April marks World Day for Animals in Laboratories.

Company Contact:

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Naturewatch Foundation

T. +44 (0)1242 252871

E. info@naturewatch.org

W. <https://www.naturewatch.org>

Additional Contact(s):

Sarah Carr, CEO

sarah@naturewatch.org

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