Lords approve expansion of protest laws around animal testing sites

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The new powers will come into force within days following the approval

Despite strong opposition, the House of Lords has voted to approve a change to protest laws that campaigners say will make it easier to restrict peaceful demonstrations outside animal testing facilities.

Peers voted on Wednesday to pass a Statutory Instrument (SI laid on 27 November 2025) reclassifying "Life Sciences infrastructure" as Key National Infrastructure under the Public Order Act 2023, despite warnings that the move would curb protest rights and reduce public scrutiny of animal testing.

The vote followed a full debate and division in the Lords, triggered by a rare fatal motion tabled by Baroness Natalie Bennett. With the motion defeated, the law change will take effect within a week.

Campaigners say the change expands police powers to restrict protests, allowing tighter controls around sites linked to animal testing, including laboratories, universities, and animal breeding facilities.

If deemed to cause "significant disruption", peaceful demonstrations near designated sites could now result in arrests, unlimited fines, and up to 12 months in prison. With online activity not ruled out, 'interfering' with protected facilities through online campaigning could criminalise those lending their voices to animals used in scientific research.

Animal welfare charity Naturewatch Foundation said the decision marks a major shift in the public's right to peaceful protest and efforts to advance animal welfare in the UK.

> "To publish an alleged 'phase out of animal testing' one day, yet 16 days later declare war on peaceful protests, this Government has shown no genuine intention to phase out animal testing with any transparency at all. This move is shocking. It's a shameful use of parliamentary process to keep the industry happy that causes such barbaric suffering to millions of animals every single year, without any evidence-based scientific justification," said Kate Salmon, Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation.

Campaigners warned the impact will be felt most immediately at sites where animals are bred, experimented on, and killed for research, including MBR Acres, which has been the focus of the longest-running UK protest camp in history, Camp Beagle.

> "This a hugely backwards step for science, for animals, and a really sad day for peaceful protest" says Iain Green, Director at Animal Aid.

The vote also ignited criticism of the government's approach to animal testing policy. In November 2025, ministers published a Strategy to Phase Out Animal Testing, a move welcomed by animal welfare organisations, yet the approval of limitations on protest has said to be in contradiction of their alleged phase-out plans.

> *"It is a dark day for animals in the UK, but we refuse to be silenced. Animals should not be born just to die."* Kate added.

The law change had already passed through the House of Commons in January, with 301 MPs voting in favour and 110 against.

Public opposition intensified ahead of the vote following a joint campaign by Naturewatch Foundation, Camp Beagle, and Animal Aid, supported by high-profile figures including Gemma Collins, Faye Winter, Amanda Abbington, Jodie Dyer, and Meg Mathews, reaching millions of people online.

Naturewatch Foundation said it will continue to challenge the use of protest laws to restrict campaigners and urged ministers to engage openly with public concern.

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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 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.

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