

HOME OFFICE

Coalition agreement: Household product testing on animals and working to reduce the use of animals in scientific research

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Equalities and Criminal Information (Lynne Featherstone): The coalition agreement includes two commitments relating to the use of animals in scientific research: to end the testing of household products on animals; and to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research.

We believe these are ambitious but essential and achievable goals and that scientific advances present significant opportunities to replace animal use, to reduce the number of animals used, and, where animal use is unavoidable, to refine the procedures involved so as to minimise suffering. These long-standing aims are referred to as the 3Rs.

I am, therefore, pleased to inform the House that the government has agreed arrangements to deliver both commitments.

The commitment to end the testing of household products on animals will be implemented using the licensing powers provided under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 by adding a condition to relevant project licences.

Before implementing the licence condition, I propose to consult with establishments holding relevant project licences to confirm the economic impact. I propose also to consult with establishments, relevant trade bodies and other stakeholders to agree a working definition of household product to accompany the condition.

The commitment to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research will be delivered through a science-led programme led by the National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs), an organisation with a strong record in reducing animal use. The NC3Rs will closely involve government departments and agencies, the Home Office Inspectorate, the research community in both academia and industry, and others with relevant animal welfare interests.

The programme will focus on refinement as well as reduction and replacement and will coordinate action to minimise and reduce animal use and suffering while avoiding actions which might simply drive work abroad to countries where lower standards or less stringent testing guidelines apply.

Key areas of activity will include exploiting the latest developments in science and technology to reduce animal use; facilitating data sharing and collaboration across industry and academia; providing an evidence base for changes to international regulations which require animal use; a continuing focus on the 3Rs and the use of non-human primates; and ensuring that the 3Rs are at the heart of the training of the research leaders of the future.