

# Statistics on animals in research and testing



## How many animals are used each year in the UK?

The UK Home Office publishes statistics on laboratory animal use each year. In 2011, 3.79 million scientific procedures were carried out on animals in the UK. These procedures involved around 3.71 million animals.



The overall number of animals used in scientific procedures in the UK reduced significantly between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. However, there have been worrying increases over the past decade. This trend is also occurring across the world.

## Which animals are used?

Mice	2,663,441
Rats	264,135
Fish (e.g. zebrafish, trout)	562,245
Birds (mainly chickens)	161,733
Pigs, goats, sheep & cattle	15,185
Rabbits	11,844
Guinea pigs	11,514
Amphibians (e.g. <i>xenopus</i> frogs)	8,029
Dogs (mainly beagles)	2,865
Primates (macaques & marmosets)	1,459
Ferrets	552
Reptiles	383
Horses and other equines	333
Cats	153
Other	6,750



All data relate to 2011

The RSPCA has always maintained that publication of numbers alone cannot convey the nature and level of animal suffering. The Society is trying to ensure that the official statistics (as well as the summaries of projects licensed) published annually by the Home Office include more relevant information to allow the public a better understanding of what animals actually experience and the purposes for which they are used.

There are **181 establishments** licensed by the Home Office to breed, supply or use animals in research or testing in the UK. These include universities, pharmaceutical and chemicals companies and contract research organisations [CROs].

Experiments on animals are carried out for many different purposes - for example, in medical and veterinary research, to acquire scientific knowledge, to test the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and to test the safety of chemicals such as pesticides or household products. The nature and level of suffering depends on the type of research and is classified by the Home Office as being 'mild', 'moderate' or 'substantial'. Each area of animal use has its own ethical and welfare issues. The RSPCA adopts a constructive and practical approach, judging every issue individually, critically questioning the necessity and justification for animal use and striving to replace and reduce the use of lab animals, and avoid or minimise their suffering and improve their welfare.

## Why are the numbers of animals used rising ?

The increase seen over recent years is primarily due to the creation and use of greater numbers of genetically-altered (GA) animals. GA animals - predominantly mice - were used in 2,029,383 scientific procedures during 2011, which represents 54% of the overall total. This upward trend, which is occurring worldwide, is of great concern. Genetic alteration has the potential to cause suffering not only to the GA animals themselves but also to the animals used to produce them - breeding a GA animal is itself counted as a procedure in the statistics.

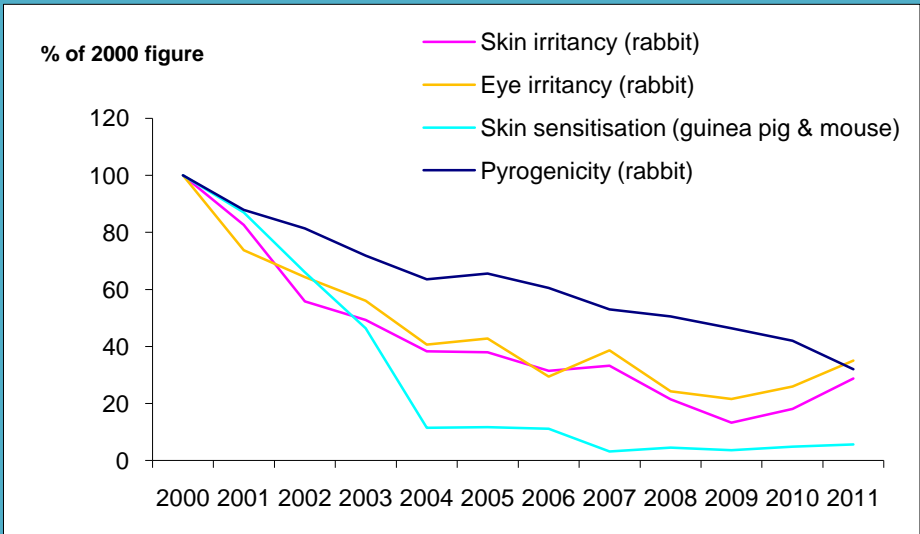
This rapidly developing technology is used in many areas of research, for example, in studies on how genes work, and in research on cancer, cystic fibrosis and multiple sclerosis. We believe that the real scientific need and justification for creating each GA animal must be much more critically evaluated to ensure that all alternative approaches have been fully explored.



Latest figures for the EU state that around 12 million animals were used in research and testing across Europe in 2008.

## Some other trends in the use of animals...

There is a welcome long-term downward trend in the numbers of guinea pigs and rabbits used. This is largely due to the development and use of alternative methods to replace these animals in tests to assess whether substances cause fever (testing for pyrogens), skin irritation, skin sensitisation or eye irritation.



For more information about the use of animals in research and testing, see: [www.rspca.org.uk/laboratoryanimals](http://www.rspca.org.uk/laboratoryanimals)

