

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 2013, 4.12 million scientific procedures were carried out on animals in the UK. These procedures involved around 4.02 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	3,045,690
Rats	262,641
Fish (e.g. zebrafish, trout)	501,841
Birds (mainly chickens)	138,287
Pigs, goats, sheep & cattle	14,500
Guinea pigs	26,342
Rabbits	11,895
Amphibians (e.g. <i>xenopus</i> frogs)	4,286
Dogs (mainly beagles)	3,554
Primates (macaques & marmosets)	2,202
Reptiles	696
Ferrets	430
Cats	109
Horses and other equines	330
Other	4,955



All data relate to 2013

The RSPCA has always maintained that publication of numbers alone cannot convey the actual nature and level of animal suffering. The Society is trying to ensure that all information published by the Home Office and those involved in animal use is honest, meaningful and allows the public a better understanding of what animals actually experience and the purposes for which they are used.

There are **174** 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 'severe'. 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 2,511,929 scientific procedures during 2013, which represents 61% of the overall total. This upward trend, which is occurring worldwide, is of great concern. Quite apart from the fact that when born, genetically altered animals may experience painful or distressing side effects that can be hard to predict, the procedures used to create these animals are not without suffering - they can involve injecting hormones and surgery to implant embryos. Large numbers of animals also lose their lives as part of the process.

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.



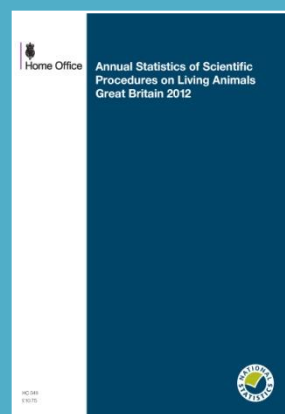
Latest figures for the EU state that around 11.5 million animals were used in research and testing across Europe in 2011.



To find out more about the application of biotechnology to animals, and our concerns, see: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/allabout/animals/laboratory/biotechnology/geneticallyalteredanimals>

More information

The full Home Office statistics can be viewed here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-great-britain-2013



For more information about the use of animals in research and testing, along with what we are doing to help lab animals, see: www.rspca.org.uk/laboratoryanimals

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