



Position Statement

13 July 2021

Research Involving Animals at the University of Zurich

Great advances have been made in scientific research and medicine, to the benefit of both humans and animals. Animal experiments played an essential part in these advances – and they will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. The University of Zurich conducts research involving animals to better understand health and diseases in humans and animals, as well as to develop new treatments.

Research with animals is necessary for a better understanding of health and disease. Without laboratory experiments on animals, the discovery of insulin and antibiotics, the development of vaccines or treatments for cancer and cardiovascular disorders, and modern diagnostic and surgical methods such as organ transplants would not have been possible. Without animal testing, there would also be no effective vaccines against the novel coronavirus.

The University of Zurich uses different animal species depending on the research objectives. In basic research, central questions about the health of living creatures and the development of diseases are investigated. The aim of applied research is to develop better therapies for diseases in humans and animals. Animal experiments will remain indispensable in the foreseeable future, because many complex biological processes can only be studied in living animals. Research on humans would be dangerous and unethical without prior animal testing.

A research project involving animals may only be carried out if there are no equivalent alternatives to achieve the desired goal and if the expected gain in knowledge for research or the benefit to society is greater than the animals' distress.

Wherever possible, the University of Zurich uses animal-free methods and only uses animals in research when other methods are not possible. The University is committed to providing exemplary animal welfare, proper training of the staff involved, careful planning of experiments, and mitigating the animals' distress at every opportunity. These responsibilities are regulated via a stringent policy and the promotion and consistent implementation of the 3R principles.

The University of Zurich is aware of the great responsibility it has toward its laboratory animals. It is committed to providing good education and training on animal testing and on the 3R principles of "replace, reduce, refine" to avoid, minimize or improve animal testing. The University encourages and requires researchers and animal caretakers to treat animals in a respectful, knowledgeable and responsible way.

The University of Zurich understands that many people take a critical view of experiments on animals and that they only accept such experiments in certain circumstances. The University therefore takes an active part in public discourse on the subject and provides open and transparent information about



its research work with animals to the media, political authorities and the general public. This involves being open not only about the goal and the expected benefit of an experiment, but also the possible distress for the laboratory animals.

The University of Zurich welcomes the fact that Switzerland has strict regulations for research involving animals. The Swiss Animal Welfare Act, which protects the dignity and welfare of animals, is among the strictest in the world. In the Canton of Zurich, every single animal experiment is thoroughly examined by the Animal Experiments Commission and only approved by the Cantonal Veterinary Office if the commission's assessment is positive.