

## WVA Position Statement on the Humane Care of Animals in Biomedical Research

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### WVA POSITION

While each country has or should have its own regulatory framework that determines the minimum standards of care for research animals,<sup>1</sup> the WVA holds that to ensure appropriate care and welfare of animals in biomedical research, it is imperative that:

- 1) Consideration for working with animals in biomedical research follow the 3Rs<sup>2</sup> ethical framework, which includes replacement of live animal use whenever possible by non-animal alternatives, reduction of animal use to the minimum needed through proper experimental design and planning; and refinement of animal care to minimise pain and distress and optimise good animal welfare;
- 2) All individuals working with and caring for research animals, including veterinarians, technical personnel, researchers, students, and others, must have appropriate education and training in the ethics of animal use, 3Rs principles, pain management, and humane experimental endpoints, in addition to training and education regarding biology and needs of the specific animal species worked with<sup>1</sup>;
- 3) Each institutional animal care and use program should be supported by a knowledgeable veterinarian<sup>1</sup>;
- 4) An Animal Ethics Committee must review and approve all research with live animals, considering the potential harms that may accrue to animals against the potential benefits of the research. In addition, the evaluation should include the appropriateness of the experimental design, training and experience of the research team, ability for the facility and veterinarian to provide proper care and oversight of the research animals, and the use of humane experimental endpoints to ensure that animal suffering is minimised.

The WVA strongly supports the use of alternatives to animals in biomedical research whenever feasible.

### BACKGROUND

There is a current regulatory and scientific need to work with animals in biomedical research to answer pressing questions related to human and animal health. Research with animals is helpful and often mandatory to ensure safety and efficacy of new therapeutics, procedures, and devices intended to benefit human and veterinary medicine. As sentient beings, animals can experience fear, pain, distress, and suffering, therefore their use in research must only occur when appropriate non-animal alternatives are not available. Institutions must ensure that there is a robust ethical and scientific justification for using animals in biomedical research and that care of research animals is overseen by veterinarians and other qualified personnel trained in the care and oversight of the specific species being held and worked with.

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1. [OIE Ch 7.8 Terrestrial Code](#)  
2. WMCS Russell and RL Burch. [The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique](#). 1959.