

POSITION STATEMENT ON ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION

Laboratory animal veterinarians play a vital role in the conduct and oversight of research utilizing animals. Their training and experience makes them uniquely qualified to diagnose and treat conditions in animals that affect their health and well-being. As an organization comprised of veterinary professionals skilled in the health care of laboratory animals, the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM) believes that it is important to clearly state our position on the use of animals in research and the methods of oversight used to assure public accountability. The American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine:

- Supports the need for humane biomedical research involving animals;
- Believes humane experimentation involving animals is necessary to provide knowledge vital to preserve and improve health and quality of life for man and animals;
- Recognizes that the use of animals in research, teaching and testing is a privilege;
- Supports regulation of the care and use of animals used, or intended for use, in experimentation that is based on science and allows application of professional judgment and performance standards, when such regulations are uniformly and fairly enforced;
- Supports the use of professional judgment for providing veterinary care in the treatment and prevention of spontaneous and research-related medical conditions in research animals;
- Opposes legislation and regulation that adds to the burden of using animals in research without providing benefit to the animal; and
- Condemns the use of harassment, intimidation, violence, and other activities undertaken for the purpose of thwarting the research community and the life-saving work to which it is dedicated.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Scientific research requiring laboratory animals continues to result in spectacular achievements that have advanced our understanding of life and treatment of disease. Continued progress - to benefit human and animal health - requires further animal experimentation because there is, as yet, no single or array of alternative systems that permit the complete replacement for animals. Basic and applied research with animals provides invaluable and currently irreplaceable means to study human conditions because there are so many similarities between the physiology and genetics of animals and humans. While not all systems in animals and man are exactly the same, the differences in many cases are sufficiently small that animals can serve as relevant models for man or other species. Humane and responsible animal research offers the best hope for the development of new methods of prevention, treatment, cure and control of disease, pain and suffering. Animal based research is and will be, for the foreseeable future, indispensable to biomedical progress – for humans and animals.

Humane and responsible animal research embraces “the three R’s” – reduction, replacement and refinement. This philosophy commits the research community to develop, validate, and use techniques that can 1) reduce the number of animals used; 2) replace higher animals with other lower species or other non-animal models wherever possible; and 3) refine procedures to ensure the most humane treatment possible.

Despite its commitment to high standards of animal husbandry and veterinary care, the ability of the American life sciences community to carry out its work is threatened. The most obvious threats are violence and other illegal activity sponsored by some members of anti-research groups. Less obvious but no less threatening are the insidious legislation, regulation, litigation and anti-research education efforts that work to impede legitimate scientific endeavors. This strategy seeks to end all experimentation involving laboratory animals, and consequently deprive the sick and disabled of relief being sought through research. The vast majority of Americans support animal welfare, including the welfare of all animals involved in experimentation. However, most Americans do not support the extreme abolitionist position. Furthermore, assistance provided by animal welfare supporters to extremist individuals or groups who undertake violence, harassment, or obstruction of legitimate life science experimentation endangers the discoveries that may save or improve human lives and the welfare and health of animals for which they espouse concern.