



Helping Canadians Help Animals

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS)

Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux (FSCAA)

Medical Testing

Animals have been used in medical testing for centuries, but the practice has faced growing opposition, resulting in an increase in regulations for medical testing and the development of some non-animal alternatives.

There are two main types of medical research: basic and applied. Basic, also known as fundamental research, allows researchers to discover more about the relationship between different mechanisms in humans and animals. Applied research is concerned with understanding more about specific diseases and illnesses.

Although animals are used for both approaches, alternatives are more common for applied research because alternatives are more accurate than those required for basic research.

Current regulatory standards for medical research in Canada require that medical research be performed on animals. Although non-animal models can be used to reduce the number of animals required, they cannot replace animals altogether. By law, animals must be tested in basic medical research to determine how different treatments actually perform in a live body.

Health Canada explains the reasons for this on its website: "It is often important to understand how the body as a whole functions under certain conditions, including how repair and defence mechanisms operate in the whole animal. In order to conduct studies in a living body, researchers must use animals whose bodies closely resemble those of humans." It continues by saying that while advances have been made in finding alternatives to animal testing, there is still no valid replacement for all research.

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) is responsible for the oversight of experimental animals in Canada. In 1963 the Medical Research Council asked the National Research Council to create a committee to look into the issue of animals used in research.

The Special Committee on the Care of Experimental Animals was created to investigate the use of experimental animals, and made some recommendations. As a result in 1968 the CCAC was formed with the support of universities and government departments that use animals, to oversee and recommend improvements of experimental animals.

The CCAC has developed guidelines for the care and use of experimental animals and has also established assessment panels to oversee the use of animals in universities, government laboratories, and commercial laboratories. Before these guidelines were established by the CCAC, the only standard in place was the one-page guide of the Canadian Federation of Biological Societies. As a result of these improvements in oversight, the number of animals used for research has decreased while volume of research has increased. The quality of care of animals used for research has also improved during this period.

There are no federal laws in Canada that govern animal research, but there are some provincial laws pertaining specifically to animal research, as well as some federal laws that relate to the way animal research is conducted in Canada.

Sections 444-447 of the Criminal Code broadly protects animals against cruelty in Canada. Only four provinces – Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan – have legislation specific to animals in research. Saskatchewan and Alberta have incorporated the CCAC guidelines into the provincial animal protection acts.

The Food and Drugs Act, Pesticides Products Control Act, Hazardous Products Act, and Canadian Environmental Protection Act also relate to animal testing.

URL » http://cfhs.ca/research/medical_testing

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