

Secretariat

Building 5
Porton Down
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 OJQ

T 01980 61 3121
F 01980 65 8400

Dstl is part of the
Ministry of Defence

dstlfoi@dstl.gov.uk
www.dstl.gov.uk



Our ref: FOI 2014/04021
Your ref:

29 August 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 31 July 2014 requesting the following information:

1. How many project licences granted under the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 have been granted for procedures currently being carried out at DSTL Porton Down; and what the severity level for each project is.
2. How many animals, broken down by species, used in procedures at DSTL Porton Down in each of the past five years were bred on the premises?
3. How many animals, broken down by species, were used in procedures at DSTL Porton Down involving a) biological agents; b) chemical agents and c) nerve agents.
4. How many animals, broken down by species, were used in procedures at DSTL Porton Down where no anaesthetic was administered.
5. The size of the marmoset breeding colony at DSTL Porton Down on 31st December in each of the last five years; and how many of the animals in the colony were a) male and b) female.

We are treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

While I can confirm that Dstl does hold information within the scope of your request, I have to advise you that in accordance with Section 12 we will be unable to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate limit.

It has been calculated that to provide this information would take one person three to four working weeks to complete because of the manner in which the information is held; this is explained in more detail under Section 16 of this letter, and for these reasons the time and effort to complete this task is over cost.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for the public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central Government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Duty to provide advice and assistance), you may find it helpful to note that the use of animals in research is very carefully governed and monitored by the Home Office via the Animals Scientific Procedures Act (ASPA) 1986. This act requires the return of specific categories of information on an annual basis, at the end of January for the previous calendar year.

Dstl takes this responsibility very seriously and operates a single central database that collates information provided by all of the many individual Project Licence holders in accordance with the information required to be returned to the Home Office. The different agents (chemical, biological or nerve), to which you refer in your FOI request, are not categories that are required to be included in the Home Office returns and, therefore, are not collated in the central database. As indicated above, Dstl does hold information within the scope of your request but it will be held by the individual Project Licence holders, of which there are many, in their individual laboratory notebooks or project files. This information would need to be manually reviewed by each individual to confirm whether or not they undertook any research in that particular time period with the agent in question. We have calculated that this would take one person three to four working weeks to complete a search of this nature.

Normally we would ask you to refine and reduce your request but after careful consideration even if we were to ask you to refine your request to a single agent, this would still take a significant number of individuals to manually search a large number of project files and individual laboratory note books. Therefore, for these reasons, the time and effort to complete this task would remain over cost even for a reduced and refined version of your original question.

Although we are not in a position to answer question 3 within cost for the reasons stated above, if you were to refine your request to include questions 1, 2, and 5, and clarify question 4 by revising the wording of the original question with respect to whether you mean general or local anaesthesia and when this anaesthesia was administered we believe we do have information to answer your request.

It should be noted that the Home Office collates annual returns from all establishments licensed under the terms of ASPA to conduct research involving animals, including Dstl, and releases these as part of their annual statistics in July each year. These can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-great-britain-2013>. However, this information does not identify individual research establishments.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information

Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely

Dstl Secretariat

