



22 October 2015

Statistical News Release: Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2014

The Home Office released the National Statistics publication Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2014 on 22 October 2015. The publication provides information about scientific procedures performed using living animals during the year 2014, as regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Introduction

1. Following the transposition of European Directive 2010/63/EU into UK law through amendment regulations to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, some changes have been made to the collection. The 2014 figures in this release are the first year for which these changes apply. In particular, information is now collected on procedures completed, not procedures started, as for previous publications. This has enabled details on the actual severity of procedures to be collected for the first time.

2. As a result of changes to the reporting requirements and the data collection format, the 2014 data and comparisons with previous years' data should be interpreted with some caution.

Total procedures

3. In 2014, a total of 3.87 million procedures were completed. Of these, 1.94 million (50%) related to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals¹ that were not used in further procedures and the remaining 1.93 million (50%) were experimental procedures².

4. Between 2005 and 2013, the total number of procedures increased by 42% (1.23 million procedures). The creation/breeding of genetically altered animals primarily accounted for this rise (1.08 million procedures) whilst the increase in the number of experimental procedures was much smaller (148 thousand procedures). When comparing 2014 with 2013:

- the total of 3.87 million procedures represents a decrease of 6% (-254 thousand procedures);
- the 1.94 million genetically altered animals created/bred but not used in further procedures represents a decrease of 8% (-162 thousand procedures);
- the 1.93 million experimental procedures undertaken represents a fall of 5% (-92 thousand procedures).

¹ The creation/breeding of genetically altered animals includes the use of animals for the creation of new lines of genetically altered animals and the breeding of established lines of genetically altered animals that were not used in further regulated procedures. This category also includes some animals that were bred with the intention of producing genetically altered animals, but resulted in non-genetically altered animals being born (9% of procedures involving the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals).

² Experimental procedures includes all animals used in basic research, regulatory use, translational/applied research, protection of the natural environment, higher education and training, preservation of species and forensic enquiries. It excludes the use of animals for the creation of new lines of genetically altered animals and the breeding of established lines of genetically altered animals that were not used in further regulated procedures.

Experimental procedures

5. Of the 1.93 million experimental procedures completed in 2014, the majority involved mice (60% or 1.16 million procedures), fish (14% or 264 thousand procedures), rats (12% or 234 thousand procedures) and birds (7% or 139 thousand procedures). Experimental procedures involving specially protected species (i.e. horses, dogs, cats, and non-human primates) accounted for 0.8% (16 thousand) of procedures in 2014, the same proportion as in 2013.

6. Comparing 2014 with 2013 by species.

- There was an increase in experimental procedures involving amphibians, up 44% to 13 thousand procedures in 2014, and hamsters, up 48% to 2,800 procedures. The increase in amphibians is likely to be mainly attributable to collecting information on procedures involving free feeding larval forms (e.g. tadpoles) for the first time.
- There were decreases in experimental procedures involving mice, down 8% to 1.16 million procedures, and rabbits, down 8% to 14 thousand procedures in 2014. No procedures involved the use of reptiles in 2014 whereas there were 700 such procedures in 2013.
- There was also a fall in experimental procedures involving specially protected species, down 7% to 16 thousand procedures in 2014, with decreases in procedures involving horses and dogs accounting for nearly all of this fall.

7. Of the severity assessments undertaken for the 1.93 million experimental procedures completed in 2014:

- 9% (180 thousand) were assessed as sub-threshold;
- 7% (133 thousand) were assessed as non-recovery;
- 51% (980 thousand) were assessed as mild;
- 25% (483 thousand) were assessed as moderate; and
- 8% (150 thousand) were assessed as severe.

Creation/breeding of genetically altered animals

8. Of the 1.94 million procedures in 2014 relating to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals that were not used in further procedures, nearly all involved mice (91% or 1.76 million procedures), zebrafish (8% or 154 thousand procedures) and rats (1% or 20,100 procedures).

9. Of the severity assessments undertaken for these 1.94 million procedures:

- 46% (898 thousand) were assessed as sub-threshold;
- 0.1% (1,900) were assessed as non-recovery;
- 48% (934 thousand) were assessed as mild;
- 4% (74 thousand) were assessed as moderate; and
- 2% (34 thousand) were assessed as severe.

Notes to editors

1. The purpose of this publication is to meet the requirements of the 1986 Act to collect and publish statistical information on the use of protected animals in regulated procedures during the previous calendar year and to lay that information before Parliament.
2. This publication is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-great-britain-2014>.

Press enquiries

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