



20 July 2016

Statistical News Release: Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain 2015

The Home Office released the National Statistics publication 'Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 2015' on 20 July 2016. The publication provides information about scientific procedures performed using living animals during the year 2015, as regulated by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Introduction

Following the transposition of European Directive 2010/63/EU into UK law through amendment regulations to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, some changes were applied to the 2014 collection. The 2015 figures in this release are the second year for which these changes apply. In particular, information is now collected on procedures completed, not procedures started, as for previous publications. This now enables details on the actual severity of procedures to be collected.

Comparison between the 2015 and 2014 data should be exercised with caution due to some under-reporting and misclassification in 2014 (see statistical report/accompanying user guide for further details). As a result, 2015 data are compared with 2013 data, as neither year of data are subject to the same data quality issues as the 2014 data. Comparisons with 2014 data are made for severity as information on the actual severity of procedures was not collected prior to 2014, and are only made in percentage terms due to the data quality issues for that year.

Total procedures

In 2015, a total of 4.14 million procedures were completed. Of those, 2.08 million (50%) were experimental procedures¹ and 2.06 million (50%) related to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals² that were not used in further experimental procedures.

Between 2006 and 2013, the total number of procedures increased by 37% (1.11 million procedures). The creation/breeding of genetically altered animals primarily accounted for this rise (1.00 million procedures) whilst the increase in the number of experimental procedures was much smaller (107 thousand procedures). When comparing 2015 with 2013³:

- the total of 4.14 million procedures in 2015 represents an increase of 1% or 21 thousand procedures compared with 2013;
- the 2.08 million experimental procedures in 2015 represents an increase of 3% or 63 thousand procedures compared with 2013;
- the 2.06 million genetically altered animals created/bred but not used in further procedures in 2015 represents a decrease of 2% or 41 thousand procedures compared with 2013.

¹ 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.

² 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 (7% of procedures involving the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals in 2015).

³ For details regarding the comparison with 2013, see statistical report/accompanying user guide.

Experimental procedures

Of the 2.08 million experimental procedures completed in 2015, the majority involved mice (61% or 1.26 million procedures), fish (14% or 294 thousand procedures), rats (12% or 258 thousand procedures) and birds (7% or 141 thousand procedures). Experimental procedures involving specially protected species (i.e. horses⁴, dogs, cats, and non-human primates) accounted for 0.8% (17 thousand) of procedures in 2015.

Comparing 2015 with 2013⁵ by species, there were notable changes to the number of experimental procedures involving:

- fish, up 14% (35 thousand), to 294 thousand procedures in 2015;
- amphibians, up 15% (1,300) to 10 thousand procedures in 2015;
- primates, up 12% (380) to 3,600 procedures in 2015;
- guinea pigs, down 17% (-4,500) to 22 thousand procedures in 2015.

Of the severity assessments undertaken for the 2.08 million experimental procedures completed in 2015:

- 13% (268 thousand) were assessed as sub-threshold (compared with 9% in 2014);
- 6% (123 thousand) were assessed as non-recovery⁶ (compared with 7% in 2014);
- 51% (1.06 million) were assessed as mild (compared with 51% in 2014);
- 24% (502 thousand) were assessed as moderate (compared with 25% in 2014);
- 6% (123 thousand) were assessed as severe (compared with 8% in 2014).

Creation/breeding of genetically altered animals

Of the 2.06 million procedures in 2015 relating to the creation/breeding of genetically altered animals that were not used in further procedures, nearly all involved mice (86% or 1.77 million procedures), zebrafish (13% or 267 thousand procedures), rats (1% or 11 thousand procedures), and *Xenopus* (0.4% or 9,200 procedures).

Of the severity assessments undertaken for these 2.06 million procedures:

- 55% (1.13 million) were assessed as sub-threshold (compared with 46% in 2014);
- 0.2% (3,300) were assessed as non-recovery (compared with 0.1% in 2014);
- 39% (806 thousand) were assessed as mild (compared with 48% in 2014);
- 3% (65 thousand) were assessed as moderate (compared with 4% in 2014);
- 3% (62 thousand) were assessed as severe (compared with 2% in 2014).

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-2015>.

Press enquiries

Journalists with enquiries can call the Home Office news desk on 020 7035 3535.

The desk operates from 7am to 8pm, Monday to Friday.

If you are not a member of the media, please use the Home Office public enquiries line: 020 7035 4848.

Press office out of hours number: 07659 174240. Only urgent media calls will be attended to.

⁴ Includes donkeys and cross-bred horses.

⁵ For details regarding the comparison with 2013, see the statistical report/accompanying user guide.

⁶ Non-recovery procedures are procedures performed entirely under general anaesthesia from which the animal does not recover consciousness.