



Dr John Landers
Animals in Science Committee Secretariat
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

11 August 2014

Dear Dr Landers

Animals in Science Committee – annual commission

I am writing to you to provide the Animals in Science Committee with a second annual commission of work. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for your achievements to date.

An important piece of work to which the Committee contributed this year was the publication of the Working Protocol between the Home Secretary and the Committee. The document supports the provision and receipt of advice, and places your independent scientific advice on a firm footing in the Home Office. In addition, the Committee recently provided its advice on lessons to be learnt from reviews and investigations into non-compliance. This was an important review and I was pleased to accept all of the recommendations the Committee made.

I understand that the Committee proposes to provide reports on its activities on an annual calendar basis. Therefore this commission is for the next 18 months to the end of 2015. My commissions for the period are as follows.

Harm-benefit analysis

The harm-benefit analysis is a cornerstone of our scrutiny process and guides our decision making. I am committed to reviewing the analysis that we conduct on all project licence applications. I believe it is essential the analysis continues to be robust so we can, with confidence, authorise *only* that work using animals that has a favourable balance of benefit. I therefore include four pieces of work under this theme:

1. I have asked the Animals in Science Regulation Unit to perform a review of the way in which the harm-benefit analysis is currently conducted and to prepare a report and guidance which makes this process much more transparent. I expect to publish this report in February 2015 and I therefore request the Committee to provide advice to ASRU by January 2015 to support this review.

2. I have recently received the Committee's consideration of the Animal Procedures Committee's report on cumulative severity. The report considered the potential lifetime experience of an animal and provided recommendations. I will provide a response to the advice shortly. There may, therefore, be further work in consideration of cumulative severity as part of a wider review of the harm-benefit test.
3. Building upon the ASRU report mentioned above, and your further consideration of cumulative severity, I request that the Committee review the current arrangements for performing a harm-benefit analysis. The request is three-fold:
 - a. Advice on current arrangements for performing a harm-benefit analysis and consideration of whether this might be improved,
 - b. Advice that particularly considers the most severe procedures and, relevant to particular types or values of benefit, assists in determining where the level of harm lies above which we should not grant licences, and
 - c. Advice that reflects on the current process of licence referral (which enables the Committee to perform a harm-benefit analysis) and considers how the Committee can maximise the effectiveness of its expert scrutiny of such licence applications in a strategic way.
4. In the meantime, pending completion of the reviews above, a key element of the Committee's work should continue to be the scrutiny and consideration of project licence applications through the current referral process.

I also commission the Committee to provide advice on the following thematic areas.

Section 24

5. The Home Office has recently completed a public consultation on the review of Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act. Officials will provide the Committee with analysis of the responses arising from the public consultation for the Committee's comment. I would like the Committee to complete its review by 19 August so that I may make a public statement about our way forward on our commitment to openness and transparency.

Household Products

6. The Coalition has made a commitment to ban the testing of household products on animals. I will be proposing a solution which would also effectively end the testing of ingredients primarily intended for use in such products unless a strongly justified case can be made for the need to test such an ingredient. I will seek the Committee's advice in the autumn on my preferred policy options with a view to implementing the ban by February 2015.

Code of Practice

7. I intend to publish by Christmas this year a revised version of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act Code of Practice for the care and accommodation of protected animals. Officials will provide the Committee with a final draft version for consideration so that I can lay it before Parliament in December.

Over-breeding

8. The Home Office will be reviewing the rationale for high numbers of genetically altered animals bred. With advice from the Committee, I would like to identify steps that can be taken to drive down figures for genetically altered breeding for publication in February 2015.

Other functions

The Committee has a responsibility to engage with Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies. I look forward to hearing how the Committee will be taking forward this agenda.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norman Baker".

Norman Baker MP
Minister of State