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Lord Sharpe of Epsom

29 June 2023

Dear Minister

Animal in Science Committee – Forced Swim Test Report


In August 2022, the Home Office commissioned the Animals in Science Committee (ASC) for advice on ‘the evidence of alternative methods and appropriate justification for the use of the forced swim test under the Animals (Scientific) Procedures Act’. The ASC was also asked ‘How should the 3Rs be applied regarding the forced swim test, drawing on the available evidence and licence review?’. The ASC is pleased to send to you its Forced Swim Test (FST) Report.

This report summarises the findings of the Project Licence Strategic Review Subgroup, following a review of forced swim licences, provided by the Home Office, and additional evidence provided by the project licence holders and other stakeholder groups.

The report makes recommendations around: specific scientific justification for future use of the FST; purposes for which the FST should not be used; the need for further research into non-animal methods for studying depression, antidepressants and other areas of research where the FST is currently used; and, when the FST is used, optimum refinements to maximise animal welfare.

The ASC would like to thank the Home Office for their assistance to the Committee during this review, and to thank everyone who contributed evidence for the review. We look forward to working with the Home Office in support of the implementation of these recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Professor David Main
Chair of the Animals in Science Committee