



University of Zurich Policy on Experimental Animal Research

The University of Zurich (UZH) is a leading international institution in the area of life sciences. The knowledge gained in this area of rapid scientific progress is of great significance to Switzerland, both socially and economically. The importance of Zurich as a research center is also determined to a large extent by its ability to integrate results gained across various disciplines, ranging from the molecular level to the level of entire populations. Each research area has its own methods, which are being constantly developed in order to open up new avenues of research. The large range of research questions demands an equally large range of approaches, selected according to their suitability to solve a particular problem. Experiments with living animals are essential in many research areas within the life sciences.

A respectful, informed and conscientious approach to animal research is a major tenet in the code of ethical conduct at the University of Zurich, and a prerequisite for obtaining valid research results. The UZH Executive Board is therefore committed to promoting and enforcing compliance with the following tenets and principles in its research groups. The Board thereby supports the policy papers of the “Basel Declaration”¹. The “University of Zurich Policy on Experimental Animal Research” is based on the CRUS (Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities) Policy for Animal Research².

The Executive Board enacted the “University of Zurich Policy on Experimental Animal Research” on October 3rd 2013. This policy replaces the joint ETH/UZH policy paper.

The Executive Board³ of the UZH ...

1. ...requires all staff members involved in animal research to observe a respectful, professional and conscientious treatment of all experimental animals.
2. ...demands exemplary implementation of the legal requirements for animal welfare⁴ and the 3R principles⁵. It supports measures for implementing the 3R principles, in particular the application of methods and measures that reduce stress or discomfort to animals before, during and after the experiment (*refinement*), the use of state-of-the-art approaches designed to minimize the number of animals used and avoid unnecessary duplication of experiments (*reduction*), and the replacement of specific experiments involving animals with alternative procedures whenever possible (*replacement*).
3. ...provides animal facilities and research infrastructure that ensure professional housing, breeding and care of laboratory animals, while at the same time facilitating research that makes use of state-of-the-art technologies and methods consistent with modern science.
4. ...advocates knowledge transfer among researchers, also concerning insights gained from negative findings (e.g., non-significant results, inapt experimental set-up, non-publishable findings, etc.), with the aim of reducing the number of experimental animals and of promoting those approaches that are most suitable for achieving the research objectives.
5. ...ensures that the legally mandated training and continuous education for researchers conducting animal experiments as well as for animal technicians and care takers are carried out at a high quality level. Furthermore, it calls for and promotes complementary education and subject-specific further training.

¹ <http://www.basel-declaration.org/>

² <http://www.crus.ch/index.php?id=12&viewKTDocument=28544>

³ Including the managing body of the faculties and institutes.

⁴ Swiss Federal Law on Animal Protection of 16 December 2005 (Tierschutzgesetz TSchG, SR 455), Art. 3, 17-20; Ordinance on Animal Protection of 23 April 2008 (Tierschutzverordnung TSchV, SR 455.1), Art. 112-149; Ordinance of the FVO on laboratory animal husbandry, the production of genetically modified animals and the methods of animal experimentation of 12 April 2010 (Tierversuchsverordnung, SR 455.163).

⁵ The 3 Rs (replace, reduce, refine) refers to a concept developed by William Russell & Rex Burch (Principles of Humane Experimental Technique, 1959), which today is internationally recognized and which must be taken into account when designing experiments with animals.



6. ...supports researchers in their interactions with supervisory and authorizing offices and helps researchers implementing measures to protect animals by employing an animal welfare officer. The animal welfare officer consults and supports researchers, acts as intermediary to the authorities and oversees the efficient implementation of the agreed-upon measures.
7. ...is committed to transparent and constructive communication on animal experimentation, animal welfare and alternatives to animal testing. The Board presents its stance on animal research in an open dialogue with policymakers, law enforcement officials and the general public. Furthermore, it ensures that staff members are sensitized to the complexity of experimental animal research and are made aware of the controversy surrounding this subject in society, thus contributing to the formation of a comprehensive and differentiated opinion.

All staff members of the UZH working with animals ...

8. ...must comply with the Swiss regulatory framework⁶ and UZH's policy on experimental animal research. They must have at least the professional qualifications required for their work, i.e., they must be knowledgeable about the biology of the animals used and be familiar with the legal and institutional requirements.
9. ... oversee and carefully document under personal responsibility any potential stress or discomfort on the animals before, during and after every experiment. Whenever possible, researchers must work toward reducing stress or discomfort of the animals by introducing suitable measures. Deviations from standard housing, breeding, and care practices may only be undertaken in well-justified cases with the approval of the responsible authorities and only if these deviations are unavoidable in order to achieve the objectives of the experiment.

The animal facility managers ...

- 10....are obliged to comply with legal requirements and site-specific standards for housing, breeding and care of laboratory animals as well as for recording the phenotypic expression of genotypes. Together with those conducting the experiments, the animal welfare officer, the veterinarians, and, where necessary, the authorities, the animal facility managers contribute to developing standardized, well-documented procedures (e.g., in the form of SOPs⁷). They share responsibility for implementing those procedures in their units, thus ensuring professional and humane treatment of the animals.

The heads of research groups ...

- 11....who initiate and lead animal research are responsible for ensuring the appropriate implementation of legal guidelines and internal directives in their respective research groups. As those responsible for the studies, they function as role models for their staff and promote awareness of the problems associated with the issues of animal experimentation. They promote the legally required opportunities for continuous training and education. They are guided by legislation and the recommendations of professional organizations for laboratory animal science, as well as by state-of-the-art scientific knowledge.

⁶ Legislation on animal welfare (see note 4) as well as the Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Experiments on Animals, Swiss Academy of Sciences & Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (2005).

⁷ Standard Operating Procedures



The UZH animal welfare officer ...

12....acts independently of the researchers and the heads of the animal facilities and reports directly to the Vice President in charge. As an expert, he or she is the link between the UZH and the authorities, oversees the correct implementation of legislation and internally agreed measures at UZH, and encourages the use of established 3R procedures or the development and validation of new ones on a case-by-case basis. In cases of violations of legal obligations or deviations from agreed protocols and database entries, the animal welfare officer is authorized to demand the correct implementation and to enforce this with the support of the UZH Executive Board.