

SCIENCE/BIOLOGY TEXTS

SHORT WRITTEN TEXTS (NEWSPAPERS)

NZPA. 'Animal testing body seeks rigid record keeping'. *New Zealand Herald*. (2003).

Animal testing body seeks rigid record keeping

VIVISECTION: Ethics committee wants to control humane deaths for research

Animals killed humanely for research, testing and teaching are being excluded from figures kept by advisers on the ethics of vivisection.

The Animal Welfare Act 1999 excludes such deaths from its formal definition of "manipulation", an area overseen by the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee.

But the committee said yesterday in its annual report that before the act took effect in 2000 it had recommended to Agriculture Minister Jim Sutton that the slaughter of animals for research, testing or teaching should be defined as "manipulation" of the animals.

"The minister declined to seek an amendment at that time, but indicated a willingness to reconsider the matter if the issue continued to generate concern after the act had been in force for a period," the committee said in its report for 2002.

It said it still believed such deaths should require specific ethical approval, and be included in figures kept on animal manipulation.

"NAEAC expects to make a formal recommendation to the minister on this matter," it said.

The committee said there was a 17 per cent drop in the number of live animals used for research, testing or teaching last year from 318,583 in 2001 to 263,684. The latest figures included 474 unborn mammals and 2454 birds' eggs.

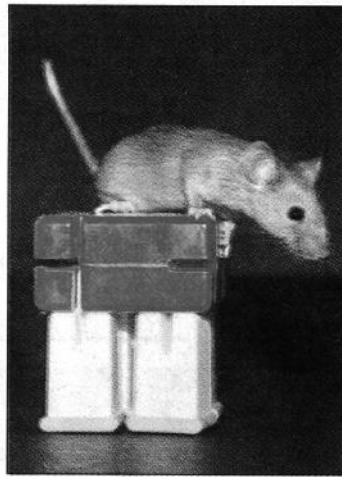
"Last year's figures also showed a drop of over 90 per cent in the number of animals being used by the Government sector, which in 2001 reported higher numbers due to large pesticide trials," said a committee member, MAF animal welfare director David Bayvel.

The main animals used were cattle, sheep, mice and fish, and the two biggest drops in terms of animal percentages were possums and fish.

Dr Bayvel said mice were still the most commonly used animals for research and product testing.

There was an increase in the numbers of marine mammals, reptiles and a class of molluscs called cephalopods — which includes octopuses, squids and cuttlefish — and crustaceans, including crayfish, used for basic biological research.

Basic biological research was the main reason for animal use during



>> Animal suffering

Level of stress or pain during experiments:

- Very severe: 4.9 per cent.
- Severe: 1.1 per cent.
- Moderate: 15.7 per cent.
- Little: 43.6 per cent.
- None: 34.7 per cent.

Source: National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee.

2002, which increased by 18 percentage points to 32.6 per cent of animals used. Other categories of research included medical (11.5 per cent) teaching (10 per cent), commercial work (20.1 per cent) and veterinary (10.6 per cent).

Most (78 per cent) animals used experienced little (43.6 per cent) or no (34.7 per cent) suffering on the lowest two rungs of a five-point severity scale.

But 4.9 per cent experienced "very severe suffering" in manipulations which caused severe stress or pain for a long duration or pain of very severe intensity.

Only 1.1 per cent experienced "severe suffering" and 15.7 per cent experienced "moderate suffering".

Nearly 90 per cent of animals used were "normal" and only 0.6 per cent were genetically engineered, with the actual number dropping from 1556 in 2001 to 1510 last year — the lowest number of transgenic animals in six years.

— NZPA