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(Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986)

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# Code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures

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## **PART 1: 1. Introduction**

1.1. The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 regulates "any experimental or other scientific procedure applied to an animal which may have the effect of causing that animal pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm".

1.2. The Act came into effect on 1 January 1987 and its provisions are being progressively brought into force.

### **Inspectors**

1.3. Section 18 of the Act empowers the Home Secretary to appoint Inspectors; sets out their duties to visit establishments and advise and report to the Secretary of State; and empowers Inspectors to order the killing of an animal if it is considered to be undergoing excessive suffering.

### **Animal Procedures Committee**

1.4. Section 19 of the Act establishes the Animal Procedures Committee and sets out its constitution. Section 20 of the Act lays down that it is the duty of the Committee to advise the Home Secretary, having "regard both to the legitimate requirements of science and industry and to the protection of animals against avoidable suffering and unnecessary use in scientific procedures".

### **Codes of Practice**

1.5. Under section 21 of the Act, the Home Secretary is required to "issue codes of practice as to the care of protected animals and their use for regulated procedures and may approve such codes issued by other persons" and to consult the Animal Procedures Committee before publishing such a code.

1.6. This Code of Practice is issued under section 21. Section 21(4) says that a "failure on the part of any person to comply with any provision of a code . . . shall not of itself render that person liable to criminal or civil proceedings but . . . any such code shall be admissible in evidence in any such proceedings . . . and if any of

its provisions appears to the court . . . to be relevant . . . it shall be taken into account" in determining the outcome of the case.

### **The RS/UFAW Guidelines**

1.7. As a response to the Act, the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) jointly issued detailed guidelines for the housing and care of animals in scientific procedures (46).

1.8. In preparing these guidelines, the two bodies undertook wide consultations within the scientific community and organisations concerned with the welfare of animals. It was always understood that the Royal Society/UFAW guidelines might form the basis of a code of practice issued under section 21 of the Act.

1.9. The conclusion of the RS/UFAW guidelines reads as follows:

*"It is an underlying principle of the 1986 Act that animals bred, supplied and used for scientific purposes should be cared for in accordance with the best standards of modern animal husbandry. It is hoped that these guidelines on housing and care will help to establish such standards.*

*Although sizes of cages and pens are recommended, from the animal 's point of view cage shape and furniture may be more important than size and the social relationship of its fellows more important than stocking densities. The care given by staff may be the most important factor of all.*

*Knowledge of the needs of animals is always growing and it is necessary that it continues to be shared. Breeders are willing to provide details of the high quality animals they supply; licensees, technicians, animal house curators and veterinary surgeons responsible for the care of the animals should share their experiences and knowledge and, if needs be, seek advice from the Home Office Inspectorate. It is up to all concerned to keep themselves fully aware of developments that might improve the standards of husbandry of the laboratory animals in their care."*

1.10. The Government shares this view. It is the Government's policy, enshrined in the Act, that scientific procedures on living animals can be permitted only if stringent safeguards are followed to prevent unnecessary suffering to the animals.

### **This Code of Practice**

1.11. This Code is closely based on these guidelines and it is a tribute to the excellent and thorough work done by the Royal Society and UFAW that little amendment has been needed to convert their guidelines into a Code of Practice which should command widespread support.

1.12. It is issued following further and extensive consultation with a number of interested organisations. It has been endorsed by the Animal Procedures Committee. Like the guidelines on which it is based, this Code represents "a consensus of views obtained from scientists and consultants working in academic and industrial spheres as well as from societies and associations that have a direct interest" (46).

1.13. It is not appropriate for a code of practice to set mandatory requirements for housing which must be followed in all circumstances. This Code incorporates the best practice of animal scientists of the highest standing. To ensure good husbandry and

to safeguard animal welfare, a high standard of facilities must be provided for animals wherever they are held and used and this Code contains specific recommendations. Where facilities are not satisfactory, a realistic (but not too extended) programme for improvement will be set. Any proposed alterations to housing systems or facilities are a matter for discussion with the Inspector.

1.14. Animal science is a developing discipline. For example, research has begun to show innovative ways of group housing which further study may show to be superior to standard methods of housing particularly for non-human primates but also for cats, dogs, ferrets and rabbits.

### **Application of the Code of Practice**

1.15. This Code applies throughout the United Kingdom. In Great Britain it is administered by the Home Office. In Northern Ireland, it is administered by the Department of Health and Social Services on behalf of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Where the Code speaks of "the Secretary of State" or "the Home Office" it means, in Northern Ireland, the Department of Health and Social Services.

1.16. This Code does not apply to places designated solely under section 7 of the Act, where animals are bred or supplied for use in procedures. Many of the requirements which will need to be met in breeding establishments are however similar. The Code may be extended to include recommendations relevant to the needs of breeding establishments.

1.17. As understanding of how best to care for animals evolves, the recommendations contained in this Code of Practice may need to be updated. The Secretary of State will keep this Code of Practice under review and will issue amendments as necessary.

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