PRESS RELEASE

Immediate: 16th July 2020

**Urgent step change needed to decrease shocking animal experiments in UK**

In 2019, 3.40 million procedures were carried out in Great Britain involving living animals, according to UK Government statistics published today, 16 July, 2020. Animal welfare charity Naturewatch Foundation is disappointed by a miserly 3% decrease in numbers of imprisoned animals over the past year. In response, the charity is urging UK government to dramatically speed up approaches to replace barbaric animal experiments with cutting edge human focussed research.

Of the 3.4 million procedures carried out on 3.3 million innocent animals (some animals are ‘used’ more than once), around half were experimental procedures (1.73 million), whilst the other half were for the creation and breeding of genetically altered (GA) animals (1.67 million). Animals are often bred to be genetically altered to test diseases.

The majority (93%) of procedures (both for experimental and breeding purposes) used mice, fish, or rats. However, 18,000 specially protected species including cats, dogs, horses and primates were used. Of this 2,200 were non-human primates such as marmosets, tamarins, crab eating macaques and rhesus monkeys.

Whilst procedures are no longer carried out for cosmetics in the UK, animal testing is still used for the safety testing of substances including 67 experimental procedures which involved the testing of household product ingredients. A significant proportion of laboratory animals are used in testing medicinal products for humans, fighting human infections, cancer and nervous and mental disorders. However, in the light of Covid-19 and the delays caused by rounds of often unreliable animal testing, scientists across the world have called upon governments to support investment in human focused science. Modern technologies such as organ-on-a-chip and advanced computer-modelling techniques remove the need to test infections, chemicals and medicines on animals and in theory, could be much cheaper and much faster to produce.

Caroline Ruane, Chief Executive for Naturewatch Foundation, commented:

“The tiny 3% decrease in the number of animals used for all experiments is extremely disappointing. The UK is a nation of animal lovers. It is awful to think of the suffering of more than 3 million animals imprisoned for human benefit in UK laboratories. I urgently call on the Government to refocus its efforts and scientific investment with a step change in supporting modern human focused research, which is so widely supported by many scientists and animal welfare campaigners.”

**END**

**More Information**

The Office of The Home Office released the National Statistics publication ‘[Annual Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 2019’](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/900960/annual-statistics-scientific-procedures-living-animals-2019.pdf) on July 16 2020. This publication provides details of scientific procedures performed using live animals during the year 2019.

* There were 3.4 million completed animal experiments in 2019 – a 3% decrease compared with 2018 statistics
* The Home Office ranks severity of procedures as either sub-threshold, non-recovery, mild, moderate or severe.
* 69,200 procedures resulted in a major departure from the animal’s usual state of health and wellbeing.
* 86,500 procedures were carried out under general anaesthesia without recovery.

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[www.naturewatch.org](http://www.naturewatch.org)

**About Naturewatch Foundation**

Naturewatch Foundation is a registered charity that has been speaking out on behalf of animals for over 25 years by:

* Campaigning peacefully against animal abuse
* Lobbying to improve animal protection legislation
* Raising awareness through education
* Supporting the World Animal Day movement to raise the status of animals around the globe

www.naturewatch.org