The Launch of PiLAS

FRAME was founded in 1969, to promote the development and application of sound scientific principles and methodology which could lead to the progressive reduction and replacement of laboratory animal procedures in biomedical research, testing and education. We are not uncritically for or against science, we do not favour humans in competition with animals, and we never put animal welfare above the welfare of humans. Rather, our aim is to avoid the conflicts that can arise between these kinds of competing interests, by encouraging positive scientific developments which are genuinely in the interests of all concerned.

While animal procedures continue to be considered necessary in some circumstances, they should be conducted in ways which ensure the highest possible standards of welfare and care for the animals concerned. As members of the Triple Alliance (the BUAV, CRAE and FRAME), which advised the British Government during the passage through Parliament of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), we were totally supportive of the inclusion of requirements for a named day-to-day-care person and a named veterinary surgeon for each animal breeder, supplier or user establishment. Now, 25 years on, we are pleased that similar requirements are spelled out in Article 24 and Article 25 of Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, which applies to all the Member States of the European Union, and which comes into force in January 2013. Like the ASPA and the Directive which preceded it (Directive 86/609/EEC), the new Directive is firmly based on the Three Rs of Russell and Burch, and the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement are clearly spelled out in Article 4.

The proper application of the Three Rs involves a wide complexity of ethical, scientific and practical considerations in relation to benefit (to humans) and suffering (of animals). These include: justification of the need for performing the specific procedures; how they should be performed in order to maximise benefit and minimise suffering; the likelihood that worthwhile benefit will be achieved and how that should be weighed against likely animal suffering; the detection, measurement and relief of suffering; the nature and uses of models; the planning of experiments and the analysis of data; the breeding, supply, transport and re-use of animals; species differences among animals and between animals and humans; and conflicts between responsibilities to animals, colleagues, science and medicine, and employers.

The aim of PiLAS is to improve the quality of discussion about animal experimentation and alternative approaches, by offering bio-scientists in all relevant fields an opportunity to share their expertise, knowledge and ideas concerning these and other issues raised by laboratory animal use.

As well as being circulated along with FRAME’s peer-review, scientific journal, Alternatives to Laboratory Animals (ATLA), articles within PiLAS will be freely available, via open access, on the accompanying website — www.atla.org.uk.

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