

## **National Animal Welfare Bill, 2005**

### **Response**

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The National Animal Welfare Bill covers a range of issues relating to the treatment of animals.

Parts 1-7 cover many aspects including animals kept by individuals as pets or for other reasons and protects animals from cruelty, pain and distress inflicted on them by their owners or otherwise either inadvertently (for example being left in a car) or deliberately (for example: debarking, removing claws, dog fighting etc).

Part 8 covers "Animals used for Experimental purposes" and rightly covers a range of issues relating to the Institutions that undertake animal experimentation, the individual researchers who do so and the Animal Units that supply and look after the animals.

Many important aspects are covered to ensure that the numbers and types of animals used, the procedures and so on are thoroughly documented. Despite the extensive reporting that is already undertaken by the researchers, research units, Institutions and the Authority, these are important steps in ensuring continued adherence to laws that protect animals from pain or stress. Development of an online reporting system by the Authority may help to streamline both the reporting and the assessment of the reporting.

However, I am deeply concerned, regarding the following sections in the Bill relating to Animals used for experimental purposes.

### **99 Matters of responsibility**

(1) "ensuring that the public is aware that proposals for cruel experiments will be scrutinized"

It is worth quoting here the definition of cruel: "Disposed to inflict suffering; having or showing indifference to or pleasure in another's pain; merciless; pitiless; hard-hearted." (Oxford English Dictionary).

I am concerned that there is an underlying suggestion by implication that cruel experiments are a) proposed and b) may even be approved within our Research Institutes and Universities. Institutional Animal Welfare and Experimentation Committees currently undertake massive and onerous screening of all research proposals, which by law, cover all experimentation undertaken in this country.

Researchers are constantly under scrutiny at each stage of developing and submitting a proposal, a process that can take several to many months, precisely to ensure that experiments are not "cruel".

I am extremely alarmed that, by the use of the word cruel in the above section, implies that we undertake experimentation which is "cruel".

My suggestion is to replace

(1) "ensuring that the public is aware that proposals for **cruel** experiments will be scrutinized"

With

(1) "ensuring that the public is aware that proposals for **all** experiments will be scrutinized"

### **102 Public notice of licenses**

- (1) "The Authority must ensure that notices of an application for a license are published in a newspaper circulating in the locality of a research unit and in a different paper circulating nationally"
- (2) "The notices must state the time and place at which the Authority will meet to consider whether to grant a license"

This is very alarming. Such a Bill, should it become law, would be a gross violation of privacy and individual rights and constitute an extremely serious security threat for all researchers.

The majority of the members of the General Public understand the necessity for research. However, there are some animal right activists and extremist who are seeking to stop all animal experimentation as well as other uses of animals. Extremists in other countries have rigorously targeted researchers and with devastating effects. I do not support the publication of researchers names in any forum which deliberately link their name to experimentation using animals.

If the Bill is passed in its current form, research will be seriously curtailed, if not completely halted because researchers are either directly threatened or perceive that they are being threatened.