



Home Office

Lord Bates
Lords Minister
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Richard Burden MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

15 SEP 2015

CTS Reference: M11505/15
Your Reference: W\jn\250815\FIEL01024

11 SEP 2015

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 25 August on behalf of your constituents regarding new facilities for breeding beagles for scientific procedures. Your correspondence was passed to me as I have responsibility for regulating the use of animals in scientific procedures.

May I begin but stating that the use of animals in scientific research remains a vital tool in improving our understanding of how biological systems work both in health and disease. Such use is crucial for the development of new medicines and cutting edge medical technologies for both humans and animals, and for the protection of our environment.

However, I can reassure you that the UK regulatory system ensures that animal research and testing is carried out only where no practicable alternative exists, and under controls which keep suffering to the minimum. This is achieved through robustly applying the principles of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction and refinement) which require that, in every research proposal, animals are replaced with non-animal alternatives wherever possible; that the number of animals used is reduced to the minimum needed to achieve the results sought; and that, for those animals which must be used, procedures are refined as much as possible to minimise their suffering. Once a licence is granted, establishments are regularly inspected by Home Office inspectors for compliance with their licence and the legislation.

On occasions where scientific research requires the use of dogs, mainly purpose-bred beagles, they are accorded special protection under the Act and licences are only granted where justified where the specific results sought can only be achieved by using a dog.

Currently, less than 0.1% of animals used in research in the UK are dogs. Of these, more than 80% of the dogs that underwent procedures in 2013 were used in applied studies for human medicine or dentistry. Dogs are also used extensively in veterinary research to better understand naturally occurring diseases and to develop treatments and preventatives such as vaccines. Around 2% are used in fundamental biological research.

Where it is essential to use dogs in research, it is better for their welfare that they should have been bred in facilities which meet the UK's high standards. It is also better that they are located close to the place where the dogs will subsequently be used since this minimises the potential stress of lengthy transport.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'B' followed by a series of loops and a final horizontal stroke.

Rt Hon Lord Bates