

Proposed revisions to methods of killing fish used in research in the UK

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Over 1.7 million fish are used in research in the EU per annum (statistics for 2005) , and their use is increasing. While there have been developments in animal welfare research for commonly used mammals, knowledge relating to research fish welfare pertains largely to water quality. The Animal Procedures Committee, a statutory body that advises the Home Secretary on specific and general issues relating to the use of animals in research, has recently completed a report advising on methods of humane killing for fish used in research. The document reviews the welfare impact of techniques for which provision is not required in a UK license and advises that maceration could be included in this list. The report also highlights the importance of good technique when capturing and handling prior to euthanasia. Studies on fish used for food indicate that chilling is not a reliable method of stunning or killing, and therefore the report advises against this technique but notes that there is insufficient evidence relating to tropical fish. Recent research on mammal euthanasia indicate that traditional methods used in the laboratory for rodents may not be as humane as was once thought because of the aversiveness of anaesthetic agents. The APC report draws the attention of funding bodies to the lack of research on the aversiveness or otherwise of anaesthetic agents commonly used for euthanasia of fish.