

Experiences from the inspection of fish research facilities in the UK

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An improvement in the consideration of the 3Rs within the experiments involving fish has been assisted by a requirement for improved welfare of farmed fish and the increase in use of zebrafish in developmental biology studies, often within academic settings, which has brought consideration of fish welfare to those more traditionally used to considering mammalian experiments. Opportunities for communication between those involved with looking after fish (vets, animal care staff and scientists) have increased, facilitating the spread of good practice.

Uptake of environmental enrichment has been patchy, but evidence that the fish use it is slow to emerge.

There has been an increase in the consideration and implementation of biosecurity measures, perhaps in part secondary to disease outbreaks, but also by changes to legislation to prevent the spread of disease within Europe.

European legislation aimed at protecting and / or improving the environment has led to a requirement for more experimental work. Where initial data is not available, this has been considered experimental. Once a monitoring phase has commenced, with a clear plan of action driven by such results, sampling has been classified as husbandry. Sampling for DNA is not currently usually considered to be “identification” and therefore requires legislative control.