

Guidelines for housing, handling, sampling and production techniques

Penny Hawkins

**Research Animals Department,
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), UK**

Housing and using agricultural animals for research purposes raises some specific issues that may not apply to the use of purpose-bred 'laboratory' animals.

For example, agricultural animals destined for consumption may be housed in accommodation that falls below equivalent standards and practice for laboratory animals with respect to space allowances, the provision of environmental enrichment and veterinary supervision and care. They may also undergo painful procedures such as tail docking, castration and tooth clipping without the anaesthetic and analgesic regimes that would be expected in the laboratory.

When using agricultural animals in research, scientific justification may be presented for housing them, or for conducting husbandry procedures, according to standard farming practice, *e.g.* for the purposes of an animal welfare study. This is allowed for in legislation such as Directive 2010/63/EU and acknowledged in the US *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, which states that there can be a 'dual system' with different criteria for evaluating protocols and housing standards according to whether the research objectives are biomedical or agricultural-based. Good guidelines for agricultural animals should (i) require housing and protocol refinements equivalent to those provided for 'laboratory' animals, and (ii) provide clear criteria for accepting deviations from these on scientific grounds.

For the purpose of this presentation, a search for guidelines was undertaken using information sources such as the USDA Animal Welfare Information Center, Canadian Council on Animal Care, Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching and the UK National Centre for the Three Rs (see separate

sheet for results). The presentation will compare and discuss these with respect to their consistency and the level of protection they provide for agricultural animals used in research.

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