

The Importance of a Culture of Care



‘A good culture of care is an environment which is informed by societal expectations of respectful and humane attitudes towards animals used in research’¹.

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What is a culture of care?

Although there are laws and regulations that govern working with research animals, everyone working with laboratory animals should strive to go beyond what is legally required and work to establish a culture of care to ensure animals are treated with compassion and respect.



Why is it important?

A culture of care is critical to ensuring the humane care and use of laboratory animals. It sets the stage for attitudes and behaviours that enhance animal welfare which is not only good for the animal, it also positively impacts the quality of the science and ultimately the lives of the people and animals that stand to benefit from the science.

However, it's not just about the animals, ensuring that staff are supported emotionally is a key element and defining feature of a culture of care.



How do we demonstrate we have a culture of care?

Company ‘Codes of Conduct’ reinforce expectations and values such as transparency, respect, accountability and teamwork. If we all adhere to these expectations and values staff will be supported and, in turn, will support and deliver a culture of care for laboratory animals.

In the UK culture of care is assessed by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit, of the UK Government Home Office. Establishments are regularly inspected for compliance with legislation that states a culture of care must be nurtured, championed and promoted.



Factors considered when the culture of care is assessed:

- leadership
- animal facilities and animal care (clean, tidy, organised, enrichment, attitudes, empathy, staff morale)
- staffing, training, competence verification
- conduct of regulated procedures (competence, 3Rs application)
- record keeping
- effectiveness of the establishment's AWERB and Named People (review, advice, information dissemination, general effectiveness)
- governance and communications (appropriate policies & guidance, information sharing).

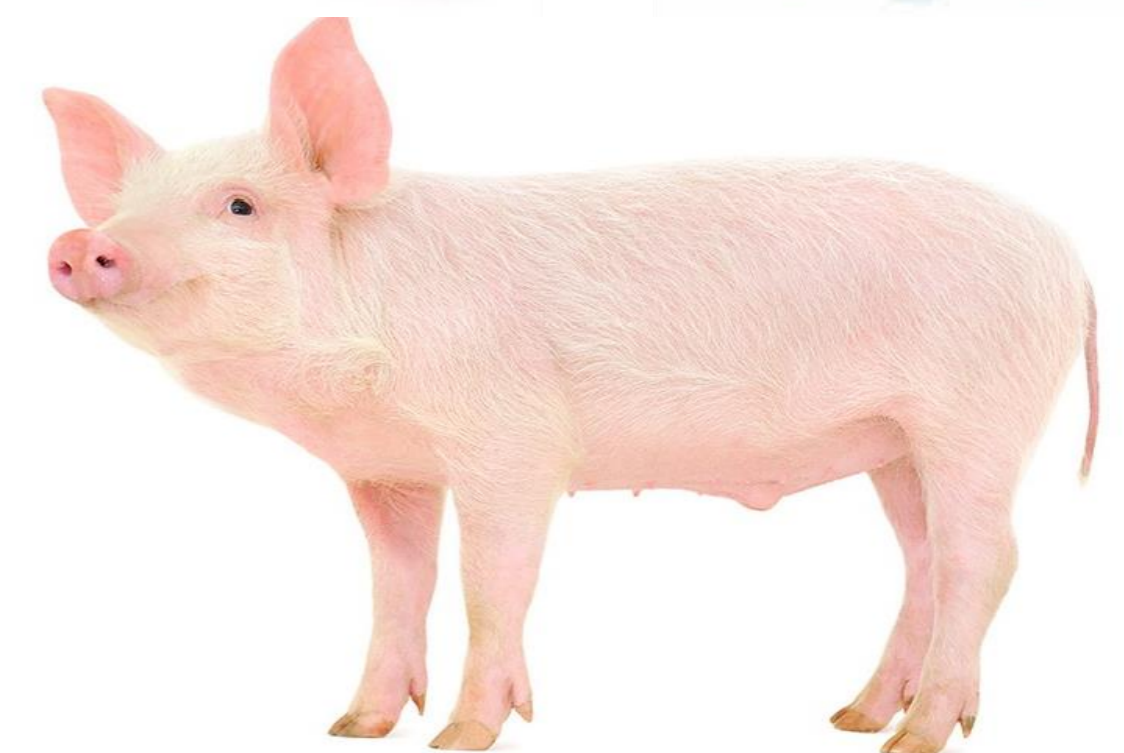
Who is responsible and accountable for our culture of care?

The legislation identifies who is responsible and accountable to ‘nurture, champion and promote’ the culture e.g., those with statutory named roles for animal care and welfare. However, everyone working with laboratory animals has a moral responsibility for the culture of care, not just within an establishment to comply with legislation but also to meet the societal expectations for the care and welfare of laboratory animals.

What are the expectations for the culture of care now and in the future?

The expectation is not to just establish a Culture of Care but also...

- have a clear vision of what the culture means for the establishment
- ensure the culture permeates the establishment
- demonstrate how you nurture the established culture



We can never sit back and think the task to establish a culture of care is completed. We can and should always do more, it is not only our legal responsibility but our moral responsibility too.



Thank you for reading this poster and your ongoing support for your establishments culture of care.