

Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Experiments on Animals

Basis	The principle of “respect for life” and the obligation to avoid the infliction of suffering necessitate the restriction of experiments on animals. Animals have the right to the respect of their dignity and of their species-specific characteristics, needs and behaviours.
Ethical balancing	Researchers must demonstrate the need for and appropriateness of every animal experiment and evaluate these through ethical balancing.
Reduction of suffering	Knowledge should be gained using the minimum possible number of animal experiments and the minimum possible level of suffering. If the suffering of individual animals can be reduced through the use of a larger number of animals, the reduction of individual suffering shall take priority.
Professional care	In experiments that involve longer periods of suffering or repeated intervention, every possible measure shall be taken to alleviate the suffering caused. The professional care of the animals before, during and after the experiment is particularly important.
Termination criteria	Criteria for the termination of animal experiments must be defined before experiments are started.
Proper living conditions	Every effort must be made to ensure that pens and cages are well made and generously sized, and that the animals have adequate opportunities for activity and social contact.
Renunciation of testing	Certain experimental set-ups can be expected to cause such severe suffering for animals that the weighing up of ethical concerns will always fall in favour of the animals. If it is not possible to find less harmful and more ethically acceptable set-ups by changing the research hypothesis, it will be necessary to refrain from carrying out the experiment.
Breeding of animals	The risk of the development of defects, suffering or pain must be particularly thoroughly evaluated for genetically modified animals.
Responsibility	Investigators bear the moral, scientific and legal responsibility for the planning, justification (through ethical balancing) and implementation of experiments on animals. This responsibility is shared by all other persons involved in the experiments.
Information	Researchers shall support the open provision of information about experiments on animals to the public.

Extract from the 2005 version of the “Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Experiments on Animals”. The complete document is available on the internet in German, French and English (www.samw.ch and www.scnat.ch). It can also be obtained from the secretariats of the SAMS and SCNAT: Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences, Petersplatz 13, CH 4051 Basel (mail@samw.ch); Swiss Academy of Sciences, Schwarztorstr. 9, CH 3007 Bern (info@scnat.ch).