

Responsibilities in Animal Experimentation

How are the responsibilities attributed in animal experiment projects according to animal welfare legislation? This question is of particular importance if shortcomings are discovered during inspections. Quite often, the persons concerned are unaware of their own responsibilities. The following interpretations are intended as clarification:

A Function and responsibilities of the scientific head of the institute or laboratory (cf. article 14 paragraph 1 TSchG; Swiss Federal Act on Animal Protection, 9.3.1978)

It is the person who decides on the research strategy, the attribution of personnel, infrastructure and other resources within the organizational unit that carries out animal experiments. This person is the holder of the animal experimentation license and responsible for:

- the observance of the animal protection legislation. The director has to implement and supervise organizational measures, namely the compliance with reporting requirements (e.g. experimentation personnel, starting date, report on pilot study) as well as special conditions (e.g. higher control frequency and control documentation).
- handing in correct Form-C reports (reporting on used animals per calendar year).

B Function and responsibilities of the person in charge of experiments (cf. article 15 paragraph 2 TSchG)

The director of the experiment is an experienced professional who is in charge of its scientific management. This entails the comprehensive responsibility for scientific and animal protection aspects, in particular

- organization of work (e.g. who is trained to carry out operations?; who supervises the animals?)
- instruction and supervision of collaborators carrying out the experiment (e.g. does a post-graduate student apply the proper injection technique?)
- the overall organization of professional laboratory animal care (e.g. clear instructions for animal caretakers, decisions on when to call in veterinarians) as well as their supervision during the experiment (e.g. is control assessment on wellbeing assured and documented on weekends?)
- carrying out the necessary documentation (keeping records according to Art. 17 TSchG; filling in the data sheet for GMA, e.g. recording the state of the animals on the score sheet)

C Function and responsibilities of persons that carry out animal experiments (cf. article 15 paragraph 2 TSchG)

Persons working in animal experiment projects under the supervision of an experienced specialist. They conduct interventions or other measures on animals or supervise their condition. They are responsible for the careful execution of their duties as laid down in the experiment's authorization.

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