
Successes, current activities and future plans of the German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals (Bf3R)

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In 2013, the amended Animal Welfare Act and the new Regulation on the Protection of Laboratory Animals entrusted the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) with statutory tasks: establishing the German National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, advising the competent authorities on alternative methods, publishing non-technical project summaries, and providing advice to the European Commission on the regulatory relevance and suitability of alternative approaches proposed for validation. In order to consolidate and to enhance the competences of the BfR in animal welfare and scientific research, the German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals (Bf3R) was established at the BfR in 2015. The Bf3R is dedicated to the 3Rs – the replacement, reduction and refinement in research using animals. All activities of the Bf3R are intended to reduce animal experiments towards an absolute minimum level and to guarantee the best possible protection for laboratory animals. The Bf3R pursues a scientific, research-driven approach in its work. This implies, in particular, that the Bf3R conducts scientific research that is closely linked to its statutory tasks. The Bf3R consists of five areas of competence: 1. Centre for Documentation and Evaluation of Alternative Methods to Animal Experiments (ZEBET), 2. Reduction of severity and improvement of animal welfare, 3. Alternative methods in toxicology, 4. National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes, and 5. Coordination of research on alternative methods. The work of the Bf3R, its successes, current activities and future plans will be presented with the aid of examples.

Key reference

Bert B, Chmielewska J, Hensel A, Grune B, Schönfelder G. The animal experimentation quandary: stuck between legislation and scientific freedom: More research and engagement by scientists is needed to help to improve animal welfare without hampering biomedical research. *EMBO Rep.* 2016 Jun;17(6):790-2.