

Eithne Gallagher

request-473140-e95d3bb4@whatdotheyknow.com



Our ref: FOI 2018/04339

Your ref:

Date: 25 April 2018

Dear Ms Gallagher,

Thank you for your email of 24 March 2018 requesting the following information:

1. By species: How many animals were used in research by "The Public Authority" from January 1st 2017 to December 31st 2017?

2. Minutes, reports and correspondence of any Animal Welfare & Ethical Review Board ("AWERB"), formerly known as the Ethical Review Committee ("ERC"), or sub-committee at university level, including but not limited to departmental committees, from 2017, where these relate to experimentation or other work involving captive live animals, in addition to any guidance issued by these committees at any time if currently in use. For the avoidance of doubt the term 'committee' is used in broad definition and is inclusive of boards, groups or similarly natured structural enterprises.

I must stress that I do not seek data which identifies those under the institution's employ and agree for such information to be redacted within reason.

We are treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and we can confirm that, all the information in scope of your request is held.

Dstl Porton Down conducts less than half of one per cent of the total animal experimentation carried out in the UK.

Dstl's purpose is to maximise the impact of science and technology for the defence and security of the UK. As part of this, we develop and create battle-winning technology and protection equipment for UK Forces and Government. Our role in helping to protect the UK and its Armed Forces requires us to answer questions and develop solutions to problems that cannot currently be addressed without the use of animals in research.

Dstl returns the numbers of animals used in research to the Home Office on an annual basis in accordance with UK legislation. For calendar year 2017 3400 mice, 240 rats, 126 guinea pigs, 26 pigs and 73 non-human primates were used in research.

Dstl Porton Down operates in accordance with the requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA) 1986 and fully embraces the principles of the 3R's (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).

In respect to your request for copies of the minutes of Internal Ethical Review Committee meetings, the information discussed at these meetings was given in confidence by members of staff undertaking requirements under the terms of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act and is, therefore, exempt from public release under Section 24 of the Act (ASP). This section states:

"24. Protection of Confidential Information.

(1) A person is guilty of an offence if otherwise than for the purpose of discharging his functions under this Act he discloses any information which has been obtained by him in the exercise of those functions and which he knows or has reasonable grounds for believing to have been given in confidence".

This exemption would mean that release of even the redacted minutes of these meetings would be withheld from release in accordance with section 44 of the FOI Act, (Prohibition on Disclosure).

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Dstl Secretariat