COUNTING ON ANIMAL CRUELTY?

Latest annual statistics indicate that Australia has no commitment to reduce the number of animals used for research & testing purposes

The results for 2013 (most recent available) have been collated by Humane Research Australia and show that the number of animals used (and documented) is 4,928,872. However the figure is very conservative as it does not take into consideration those animals used in South Australia, Queensland, ACT and the Northern Territory as these figures have not been made available. Going by the most recent obtainable statistics for these states **the total number of animals used is closer to over 6.7 million**.

The procedures ranged from 'Observational studies involving minor interference' to 'Major physiological challenge', 'Production of genetically modified animals' and 'Death as an end point'.

Helen Marston, CEO, Humane Research Australia: "*Australia has a notorious record of using large numbers of animals for research in comparison with other nations. We are the forth highest user, behind the United States, Japan and China. When you consider Australia's lower human population, the number of animals used per capita suggests there is no commitment to adhere to the three R's Principle of animal use – Refinement, Reduction, Replacement.*

"The extrapolation of data from animals to humans can be dangerously misleading due to anatomic, genetic and metabolic differences. It is therefore not the most efficacious method of medical research. Australia should be investing in the development and validation of more humane and scientifically valid research methods – as occurs in Europe and the United States.

"Today's researchers carry a huge responsibility. Their work affects a great many lives – not only those animals they may choose or choose not to use – but many terminally-ill human patients who are looking toward cures. They don't care whether a cancer drug works on a mouse, or diabetes can be cured in a monkey. These ongoing promises only taunt them with false hope. These people need real cures. Unfortunately this will not happen unless we let go of antiquated methodologies that rely on data from a different species."

A full breakdown is available at humaneresearch.org.au/statistics

Additional info:

- In Victoria, **1,084,507** animals were used
- In New South Wales, **2,699,532** animals were used
- In Tasmania, **151,894** animals were used
- In Western Australia, approximately **992,939** animals were used (note that reporting of fish and cephalopods is not mandatory in WA)

Figures were not available for Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, or the Northern Territory. However, statistics available from previous years indicate that:

In Queensland, an average of **1,202,343** animals were used
In South Australia, an average of **315,822** animals were used
In the Australian Capital Territory, an average of **122,628** animals were used
In the Northern Territory, an average of **160,792** animals were used

If figures for all states and territories are collated, this would bring the approximate total number of animals used in Australia in 2013 to over **6.7 million**.

Of those animals used in 2013 that were reported (by only four states):

- **25,878 (or 0.53%) were in the 'Death as end point category'**

The aim of experiments in this category requires the animal(s) to die unassisted, i.e. not euthanased, as death is 'a critical measure of the experimental treatment'. For example, toxicological experiments such as the LD50 test, in which animals are forced to ingest, inhale, be exposed to, or be injected with a particular substance up until the point where 50% of the animals die. The test is generally conducted without anesthesia or pain relief due to concern that they would alter test results.

- **123,975 (or 2.5%) were in the 'Major physiological challenge' category**

Experiments in this category require the animal(s) to remain conscious for some or all of the procedure. There is interference with the animal's physiological or psychological processes. The challenge causes a moderate or large degree of pain/distress, which is not quickly or effectively alleviated. Examples include causing major infection, or artificially inducing cancer, without pain alleviation; isolation or environmental deprivation for extended periods; and monoclonal antibody production in mice.

- **1,022,647 (or 20.7%) were in the 'Minor conscious intervention category**

Experiments in this category require the animal(s) to be subjected to minor procedures that would normally not require anaesthesia or analgesia, but can cause some distress. Examples include tail tipping and toe clipping; injections and blood sampling; minor dietary or environmental deprivation; trapping and euthanasia for collection of specimens; and stomach tubing, branding or disbudding (removing the horns from a young animal).

- **5,839 dogs and 1,587 cats** were used in experiments
- **764,683 native mammals** were used in experiments, including **koalas, wallabies, possums, and wombats**
- **219 primates** were used in experiments
- **1,303,935 mice** were used in experiments
- **272,293 sheep** were used were in experiments
- **603,838 domestic fowl** (e.g. chickens, ducks, etc) and **410,836** other types of **birds** were used in experiments

Note that the current statistics reporting system in Australia is state- and territory-based. This system is inadequate for a number of reasons:

- Only three states regularly collect and make the statistics publicly available – Victoria, NSW and Tasmania
- There is significant inconsistency between states/territories due to variable reporting methods
- There is no standardised format for the collection or reporting of statistics
- Procedure severity categorisation is determined by indicative rather than the actual level of impact

While some states provide timely annual animal use reports, others have 5-year delays, or don't even collect statistics at all. Due to the difficulty in obtaining statistics, and discrepancies in data provided, it is difficult to create an accurate picture of the national use of animals in research and teaching. Hence, **HRA's figures usually represent very conservative numbers of total animal use.**