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Editorial

The publication of this special issue of *Animal Welfare* on the Three Rs marks the 50th anniversary of the first year of the study by UFAW Research Fellow Dr William Russell and his assistant Mr Rex Burch into humane experimental technique. Bill Russell joined UFAW from Oxford University in October 1954 and Rex Burch was appointed a few weeks later.

Not long after starting, Bill Russell gave a presentation at the UFAW AGM on 11th February 1995 in which he said of his study (see front cover):

“I believe it is also one of immense promise for the welfare of large numbers of animals, and I can only hope that its outcome will be as gratifying to look back upon as the other achievements we have heard about tonight”.

The outcome of this project was the Three Rs as set out, and firmly founded, in Russell and Burch’s erudite book, published in 1959: *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*.

This work did indeed turn out to be of immense benefit for the welfare of large numbers of animals. As many readers of *Animal Welfare* will know, the Three Rs have been adopted throughout the world as the key guiding principles in the humane use of animals in research. They have stimulated a great deal of work into finding replacements to the use of live animals where possible, into seeking ways of reducing the numbers of animals used, and into refinements in experimental methods and routine husbandry. In 2004, a national centre for the Three Rs was established in the UK to assist in their development and promotion. In view of its profound impact for animal welfare, we hope that Professor Russell does find it duly gratifying to look back upon his project.

It is with great pleasure that we publish here a review by Professor Russell as the introductory paper to this special issue.

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James K Kirkwood
Editor-in-Chief