

In his concluding comments, Robert Atkinson asks: "How many animals have been turned out to God knows what fate, with the justification that 'at least it stands a chance of survival'? Well so it does. But it also stands a chance of pain, stress and a premature death." Judging what is best for the welfare of wildlife casualties can be very difficult. These proceedings are a valuable contribution in this data-sparse field.

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The UK Government's reply to the House of Lords Select Committee Report on Animals in Scientific Procedures

In July 2002, the House of Lords Select Committee that was convened to address the use of animals in studies causing pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm published its report and recommendations (see *Animal Welfare 11*: 460-461). The UK Government has now published its response and there is a fair degree of agreement. The Government supports the Lords' recommendations for greater openness and debate about the use of animals in science, but argues that this must not be at the cost of jeopardising the safety of scientists or the protection of legitimate commercial and intellectual interests. There is also agreement that more needs to be done to advance the 3Rs by the biomedical scientific community. The Government's report emphasises the important role that industry has played in advancing the 3Rs but unfortunately does not also give credit to the considerable efforts that scientific and technical animal welfare organisations have made to stimulate the improvements to animals in laboratories that we see today. The Government argues that the majority of advances in the 3Rs have been made by biomedical scientists who work with animals. In terms of advances in alternatives to the use of animals, this may be true; however, refinements of housing have been largely developed from the work of field ethologists and zoo scientists, and adapted, tested and validated for laboratories by ethologists and laboratory animal scientists. It has, in fact, sometimes proved rather difficult to persuade biomedical scientists to accept these advances. It is also unfortunate that the footnote describing the 3Rs in the report refers to refinement only as refinement of *procedures*, and does not include refinement of housing and husbandry.

Some light is cast on the Government's thinking in terms of changes to Legislation. Openness is clearly one area under consideration; another concerns the re-use of animals and, in this case, the Government indicates that it intends to influence European legislation. There is also the suggestion that changes could be made to the way in which statistics on animal use are collected and presented.

There are some areas of disagreement with the Lords. For example, the suggestions that each designated site should be inspected by more than one inspector, and that 'lay' visitors should accompany inspectors, are both rejected.

The report indicates that the Government is in favour of exploring options for a new centre for the three Rs. It is to be hoped that any such exploration will be based on a close examination of what interested organisations are already doing in this area, identification of gaps, if any, and analysis as to whether a new centre would be the most cost-effective option to achieve the identified goals.

The Government Reply to the Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures Session 2001-2002 HL 150-1. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of her Majesty CM5729 (January 2003) Published by The Stationery Office, P O Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, UK. 14 pp A4 paperback. £5.00. Available at <http://www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm57/5729/5729.htm>