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**ANIMAL
EXPERIMENTATION**

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**DEBATING MATTERS
TOPIC
GUIDES**

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MOTION:

**“ANIMAL
EXPERIMENTATION
CANNOT BE
JUSTIFIED”**

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KEY TERMS

3Rs (Replacement, Refinement and Reduction)

Noxious stimulus

Speciesism

Vivisection

INTRODUCTION

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The rights and wrongs of animal testing have been disputed for decades. In the early part of this decade the debate was dominated by animal rights groups, whose activities led Cambridge University to abandon its plans for a primate research lab in 2004 [Ref: [BBC News](#)]. Since then supporters of animal experimentation have become more vocal and effective at getting their points across. Spurred on by a protest organised by a 16-year-old boy in Oxford [Ref: [BBC News](#)], a new pro-vivisection campaign group called Pro-Test was established and, alongside existing groups, has argued more persuasively for the importance of animal experiments. The issue remains highly contested, not least because in recent years the number of experiments conducted on animals has increased due to new scientific discoveries. In May 2008, the primatologist Jane Goodall proposed that a Nobel prize be set up for advancing medical knowledge without experimentation on animals [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Two fundamental issues are at stake. First, there is the scientific question of the nature of the contribution that animal experiments make to medical and scientific progress. Second, there are ethical questions about the moral status of animals. These ethical questions first came to prominence in the 1970s, when the publication of Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation* helped launch the animal rights movement. The main question raised is this: Should we expand our sphere of moral concern to include animals on a more equal basis, or is there something unique about human beings that justifies us in using animals for our own ends?



What is the current situation of animal experimentation in Britain?

Government policy has supported animal experiments, but has emphasised the principles of the 3Rs – the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of animals in research. However, the fact that the number of scientific procedures carried out on animals in Britain rose by 6 per cent in 2007, to just over 3.2 million [Ref: [Home Office](#)], has led the RSPCA to question the government’s commitment to the 3Rs [Ref: [Guardian](#)]. Advocates of animal testing, such as Liberal Democrat MP Evan Harris, have countered that the increase in the number of experiments is linked to an increase in the volume of medical research and that this is to be welcomed [Ref: [Guardian](#)].

Is there a scientific case for using animals in research?

Supporters of animal experimentation say it has played a part in almost every major medical breakthrough over the last century [Ref: [Research Defence Society](#)], such as the development of insulin and the polio vaccine. They also argue that it will be essential to further scientific progress in combating diseases like Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and HIV. Some go further, arguing that the advancement of human understanding is sufficient justification for animal research [Ref: [spiked](#)]. Opponents of animal research contest whether results derived from experiments on animals can be applied to humans and criticise scientists for failing to move beyond outdated procedures [Ref: [Times Online](#)]. Recently, US government agencies announced that they are working on techniques to test the toxicity of chemicals that would replace animal tests with a combination

of computer models and human cells [Ref: [USA Today](#)]. Vivisectionists point out that animals remain essential as other tests are unable to replicate the operation of a biological system [Ref: [Research Defence Society](#)].

What are the moral arguments against animal experimentation?

Arguments against the use of animals employ a number of moral frameworks but share a commitment to a revised view of the relative moral standing of humans and animals. The philosopher Richard Ryder coined the term speciesism to describe prejudice against other species which, he argues, is on a par with racism or sexism. Respecting the rights of animals is seen as a further step in the expansion of our sphere of moral concern and as part of overcoming human arrogance. This argument involves the identification of a source of moral status which is common to humans and animals: the capacity to suffer pain. Supporters of animal rights take the lesson of Darwinism to be that humans are part of nature, existing on a continuum that has no radical break between animals and humans. This is backed up by observations of the similar way in which animals and humans react to noxious stimuli, showing the same kinds of neurochemical response [Ref: [Grandin](#)].

What are the moral arguments for animal experimentation?

Those in favour of animal experiments, by contrast, locate moral standing in capacities that set humans apart from animals [Ref: [New Statesman](#)]. They argue that humans are rational and autonomous beings, capable of pursuing chosen ends



ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION DEBATE IN CONTEXT CONTINUED...

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and of constructing moral systems and then living with other humans on the basis of these moral rules [Ref: Guardian]. This makes humans self-conscious subjects, while animals are non-autonomous objects driven by instinct and unable to rise above the dictates of nature. We recognise this distinction in our everyday lives, they suggest – we would be suspicious of someone who put the interests of their pets before those of their family, and most people eat meat. Proponents of a human-centred morality argue that it is a mistake to draw moral conclusions from the scientific theory of Darwinism. The distinction between humans and animals is qualitative not quantitative: animals develop through evolution but humans develop themselves.



ESSENTIAL READING

Put Animal Testing to Sleep

John J. Pippin vs Frankie Trull *Business Week* 28 May 2008

You won't find chimps having this debate

Richard Ryder vs Kenan Malik *Guardian* 13 June 2006

Of mice or men

Arthur Allen *Slate* 1 June 2006

Monkey brain research: the case for

Anonymous neuroscientist *BBC News* 28 November 2003

Monkey brain research: the case against

Ray Greek *BBC News* 28 November 2003

For

Labour's vivisection 'failure'

Wendy Higgins *New Statesman* 21 July 2008

All beings that feel pain deserve human rights

Richard Ryder *Guardian* 6 August 2005

Man and other animals

Jeremy Rifkin *Guardian* 16 August 2003

Animal experimentation – the facts

Uncaged

Against

The shame of our silence

Robert Winston *Guardian* 31 May 2006

Test driven

Stuart Jeffries interviews Tipu Aziz *Guardian* 4 March 2006

The hard arguments about vivisection

Stuart Derbyshire *spiked* 2 March 2006

Animal research: myth and fact

RDS

In Depth

Our duty to animals

Alan Thomas *Guardian* 7 March 2006

Animal liberation at 30

Peter Singer *New York Review of Books* 15 May 2003

Scientists 'should be allowed to test on apes'

Steve Connor *Independent* 3 June 2001

Animal research: a scientist's defence

Stuart Derbyshire *spiked* 29 March 2001

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BACKGROUNDERS

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How Much Does Animal Testing Tell Us?

Laura Blue *Time* 17 June 2008

Statistics on the use of animals in scientific procedures in Great Britain

Home Office 2008

Is animal testing 'abusive'?

BBC News Have Your Say 24 July 2006

Quick guide: Animal testing

BBC News 24 July 2006

Animal research - which side are you on?

Times Online Debate 24 February 2006

Godfather of the animal rights mob

Stuart Wavell *The Sunday Times* 28 August 2005

How much animal testing is done?

BBC News 24 August 2005

A critical look at animal experimentation

Christopher Anderegg et al *Medical Research Modernization Committee (MRMC)* 2002

Peter Singer's Animal Liberation

James Parker *AnimalRights.net* 4 August 2000

The necessity for animal research

Biomedical Research Education Trust

Animal Rights

New Statesman

ORGANISATIONS

Americans for Medical Progress (AMP)

Animal Aid

Animals in Medicines Research Information Centre (AMRIC)

British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV)

Coalition for Medical Progress (CMP)

European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM)

Foundation for Biomedical Research

National Anti-Vivisection Society

National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs)

Patients' Voice for Medical Advance

PETA Stop Animal Tests

Pro-Test

RDS

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Safer Medicines Campaign

SPEAK

The Boyd Group

Uncaged



ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION:

"Animal experimentation cannot be justified"



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IN THE NEWS

Vivisection: Scientists use 6% more animals for research
Guardian 21 July 2008

Goodall urges Nobel prize for sparing lab animals
Guardian 28 May 2008

Three U.S. agencies aim to end animal testing
USA Today 14 February 2008

Court review for animal testing
BBC News 23 July 2007

Majority 'back' animal research
BBC News 27 July 2006

Drop in animal rights activist attacks
Daily Telegraph 27 July 2006

Animal lab groups hold protests
BBC News 4 June 2006

Testing on apes 'might be needed'
BBC News 3 June 2006

Report claims experiments on monkeys are vital
NewScientist.com 2 June 2006

PM criticised over animal testing
BBC News 14 May 2006

Animal rights extremists target Glaxo
Times Online 8 May 2006

Animal research petition launched
BBC News 19 April 2006

Science examines animal suffering
BBC News 4 April 2006

Scientist backs animal testing for cosmetics
Guardian 4 March 2006

Scientists to speak out for animal tests
Guardian 24 February 2006

Use of animals still vital to progress, say top scientists
The Times 25 August 2005

Scientists demand law against animal rights extremism
NewScientist.com 22 April 2004

Scientists doubt animal research
BBC News 27 February 2004

Primate research lab plans axed
BBC News 27 January 2004

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**“TEENAGE CITIZENS
THINKING DEEPLY
ABOUT...SOCIAL
ISSUES”**

IAN GRANT, CEO, BRITANNICA

