



Sent by email: [REDACTED]

10 June 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00406**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 13 May in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. I request to know the information for the years 2022 (01/01/2022 to 31/12/2022) and 2023 (01/01/2023 to 31/12/2023).*

1. *Did the MRC experiments on animals?*
2. *How many animals were used in experiments (species & number of each)?*
3. *How many animals were bred on the premises (species & number of each)?*
4. *What was the nature and outcome of these experiments?*
5. *What are the Home Office licence classifications for these experiments in terms of pain, lasting harm, etc. if classified (species & number of each)?*
6. *How many animals were killed without being used for experiments (species & the number of each)?*
7. *How many animals were rehomed (species & number of each)?*
8. *Of those that were not re-homed, why not?*
9. *Does the MRC receive an income for performing animal research?*
10. *Does the MRC incur any costs by performing animal research?*
11. *Were there more non-animal research methods used than animal methods? Eg. 70% where non-animal models were used and 30% where animal models were used.*
12. *Which non-animal research methods are available at the MRC? Eg. 3D printing, human skin cells, organ-on-a-chip.*

**Our response**

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

**1. Did the MRC experiments on animals?**

MRC-owned establishments undertake scientific research using animals. The MRC also funds research that involves the use of animals.

In relation to questions 2, 4, 5 and 6, the information you have requested for 2023 is exempt from disclosure under Section 22(1) of the FOIA as it is intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption meaning that it is subject to the public interest test.

UKRI understand that being transparent in regard to scientific procedures for animal use under ASPA is in the public interest. However, the data is still incomplete, and we are of the view that releasing the information as it

currently stands may be inaccurate, incomplete and/or misleading and thus not in the public interest.

We have therefore determined that the outcome of this test is that the public interest is insufficient to justify immediate disclosure. UKRI releases such information for MRC owned establishments annually. Figures for 2023 will be published on our website after the release of data for 2023 by the Home Office, which we expect will be published in Summer 2024.

Figures (currently for 2022) are published [here](#)<sup>1</sup>

## 2. How many animals were used in experiments (species & number of each)?

The figures on the animal use (the number of procedures, their severity and the use of species) carried out by the MRC owned establishments in 2022 are published on the MRC website [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Please note that the number of reported procedures does not equate to the number of animals, as some animals may be used in more than one procedure. Further information on reporting scientific procedures to the Home Office can be found [here](#).<sup>2</sup>

## 3. How many animals were bred on the premises (species & number of each)?

Find below the total numbers and species bred by the MRC-owned establishments in 2022 and 2023. Please note that these figures include animals bred in other research organisation's animal facilities, which contained space leased by the MRC-owned establishments.

Year	Mice	Rats	Zebrafish	Rhesus macaque
2022	230,260	9	12,797	29
2023	222,566	70	11,257	31

## 4. What was the nature and outcome of these experiments?

UKRI publishes information on all funded awards on [Gateway to Research](#)<sup>3</sup>. The Gateway to Research was developed to enable users to search and analyse information about publicly funded research. It includes information about projects supported by all seven UKRI's research councils, Innovate UK and NC3Rs and can be filtered by key terms, funder and start year.

Where research results in scientific publications, the details and outcomes of experiments are usually described in the relevant parts of research papers.

As this information is in the public domain, we consider that Section 21 - Information already reasonably accessible, of the FOIA would apply and have provided the relevant link above. Section 21 is an absolute exemption which means that there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

## 5. What are the Home Office licence classifications for these experiments in terms of pain, lasting harm, etc. if classified (species & number of each)?

For information on the severity of experimental procedures see answer to Q2 for the 2022 data.

## 6. How many animals were killed without being used for experiments (species & the number of each)?

In 2022, there were 107,283 animals sacrificed under Schedule 1 across MRC owned establishments that were not returned as part of the Home Office data collection on procedures on living animals.

This figure includes, for example, animals bred as a result of breeding genetically altered animals. It also includes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/our-policies-and-standards/research/research-involving-animals/facts-and-figures/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-great-britain-2022/statistics-of-scientific-procedures-on-living-animals-great-britain-2022>

<sup>3</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/>

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animals sacrificed to collect tissue, which was used for experimental purposes.

The breakdown of this figure by species can be found below.

Species	Number
Mouse	105,612
Rat	0
Rhesus Macaque	11
Fish	1,660

## 7. How many animals were rehomed (species & number of each)?

No animals in MRC owned establishments were rehomed in 2022.

In 2023, three Rats were rehomed.

## 8. Of those that were not re-homed, why not?

Re-homing is done by a relatively small number of institutions and involves a relatively small number of animals. The barriers are various and listed below:

- Not all research animals are legally eligible for re-homing. The legal requirements relating to the re-homing of research animals are set out in the [Animals in Science Regulation Unit Advice Note on Re-homing and setting free of animals \(2015\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82e2ab40f0b6230269d373/Advice_Note_Rehoming_setting_free.pdf)<sup>4</sup>. Many animals will be killed at the end of the study as part of the research (e.g. to obtain tissues collected for analysis) or are killed due to the pain/suffering they are experiencing.
- Re-homing must be within the best welfare interests of the animal. Transportation out of the animal facility, housing in a new environment and changes to their human carers and routines are all potential individual and cumulative stressors. Careful consideration of how these events would impact the animals' welfare state is necessary, particularly for anxious and highly routinised animals. In other words, re-homing is not a trivial event for the animals (or the institutions).
- The animal must have a suitable temperament. Highly anxious animals and aggressive animals are unlikely to be suitable for re-homing. The animal must pose no threat to human, animal or environmental health. For example, if the research has involved challenge with a pathogen or parasite, the animal may not meet the legal criteria for re-homing.
- Time and resource are required for the development of effective re-homing schemes. For example, the animal must undergo an appropriate socialisation scheme and the establishment may not have enough staff and available space to dedicate to this on an ongoing basis.
- There must be measures in place to safeguard the animal's wellbeing when it is re-homed. Research institutions may not have the resources and support required to check potential adopters for suitability and provide them with ongoing support following the adoption. This is a big reputational issue for the research institution.
- Safety and security concerns for the animals and staff within research animal facilities can limit the pool of potential adopters. Publicising the availability of research animals for adoption is usually via a small, trusted network.

## 9. Does the MRC receive an income for performing animal research?

No, the MRC does not receive income for performing animal research.

<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82e2ab40f0b6230269d373/Advice\\_Note\\_Rehoming\\_setting\\_free.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82e2ab40f0b6230269d373/Advice_Note_Rehoming_setting_free.pdf)  
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## 10. Does the MRC incur any costs by performing animal research?

As any other research activity, animal research incurs costs. These costs are factored in when research organisations, including MRC-owned establishments, apply for funding.

## 11. Were there more non-animal research methods used than animal methods? Eg. 70% where non-animal models were used and 30% where animal models were used.

Non-animal methods is a broadly defined category, and MRC does not routinely collect the relevant data.

In 2023, 31% of active MRC-funded research grants involved the use of animals licensed under the [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986<sup>5</sup>](#) (data accessed 2 May 2023 and is available [here<sup>6</sup>](#)).

## 12. Which non-animal research methods are available at the MRC? Eg. 3D printing, human skin cells, organ-on-a-chip.

MRC supports research into and the use of a range of non-animal technologies, including through the direct investment into the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs).

Some of these methodologies are being actively developed and used by the MRC owned establishments. For example, the Lancaster group at the MRC LMB is developing complex brain organoids to interrogate pathogenesis of neurodevelopmental disorders.

The NC3Rs website has a searchable resource [library<sup>7</sup>](#) that includes information on the non-animal technologies, including those that are used in scientific research and safety testing.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact within the next 40 working days:

Head of Information Governance

Email: [foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org)

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see [UKRI's complaints policy<sup>8</sup>](#).

Yours sincerely,

  
Information Governance  
Information Rights Team  
UK Research and Innovation  
[foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) | [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/our-policies-and-standards/research/research-involving-animals/facts-and-figures/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://nc3rs.org.uk/3rs-resources/search?topic%5b%5d=504>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>

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