

## **Preventing, recognizing and combating pain in laboratory animals**

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In March 2015 the Minister for Agriculture (EZ) commissioned the Netherlands National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (NCad) to provide its opinion on the procedure and application of best practices to assist researchers and Animal Welfare Bodies (IvDs) in recognising and managing laboratory animal pain in the workplace, depending on animal species and nature of the animal procedures. At the heart of the advisory report from the NCad is the Code of Practice (CoP) 'Prevention, recognition, and management of pain in laboratory animals'. This CoP was drawn up by a working group of experts and provides guidance to all parties involved in animal procedures in the prevention, recognition, and management of pain in laboratory animals.

Compelling arguments may be raised for not applying pain management. In response to these, NCad advises that the Central Authority for Scientific Procedures on Animals (CCD): 1) require researchers to provide properly supported arguments justifying the decision to ignore the issue of pain management; 2) focus attention on the non-pharmalogical management of pain, for example by improving husbandry or the application of humane endpoints; 3) keep a register of arguments for not applying pain management, those arguments that are deemed valid, and the results of any additional studies commissioned by the CCD.

Furthermore, the advisory report includes the following recommendations to the Minister: 1) to commission a report into the objective assessment, standardisation, and validation of a pain-scoring system; 2) to make the relevant curriculum committees responsible for ensuring that existing training courses include sufficient focus on pain recognition and management, that the provision of continuous education with regard to pain recognition and pain management is where necessary updated in line with, and responds to, the identified need for visual learning material and e-learning modules; 3) to promote the creation of a network of experts with a (inter)national centralised point of contact. In addition, NCad has taken the lead to bring about cooperation with other EU Member States with the ultimate goal of creating a European knowledge network; 4) The optimal application of the CoP requires supportive measures. Ensure there is an available budget in the years ahead to achieve the goal of limiting to the minimum all forms of pain in animal procedures, as advised in this report.

The minister has accepted and embraced the advisory report and has promoted the CoP as a part of the 'Culture of Care' within establishment licensees. Furthermore, in the context of the desire for harmonisation between EU Member States this CoP has been introduced via NCad in European consultations to be used in a wider internationally-supported code of practice Prevention, recognition, and management of pain in laboratory animals.

### **Reference**

<https://english.ncadierproevenbeleid.nl/advice/documents/publications/16/7/19/pain-management>