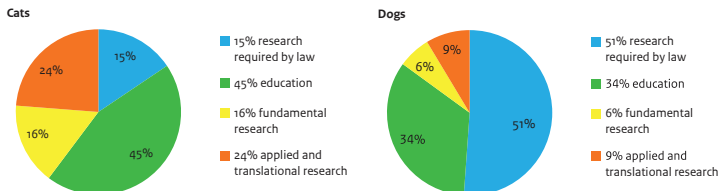




Procedures using cats and dogs

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In 2014, 621.027 animal procedures were registered in the Netherlands, of which 1.098 were conducted on dogs and 244 on cats. Of these, the vast majority were conducted within teaching activities and for the development of medicines and vaccines for cats and dogs. Although in 2014, the percentage of procedures on cats and dogs accounted for approximately 0.2% of the total number of animal procedures, the use of cats and dogs in animal procedures remains a subject of social debate and a target of demonstrations. In response to a citizens' initiative -signed by 57.000 people-, the Dutch Minister of Agriculture commissioned the NCad to develop a national strategy to minimize and annually reduce the number of cats and dogs used in procedures, to be achieved through intensive cooperation between knowledge institutions and independently of the ethical review by the Central Authority for Scientific Procedures on Animals (CCD).



Methods

- Desk research of existing reports and recommendations, partly from previous initiatives by the Ministry of Economic Affairs
- Individual consultation of experts and chain partners from the Netherlands and beyond
- Consultation of community groups that have an interest in animal procedures and the possibilities offered by the 3Rs (scientific institutions, umbrella and industry organisations, animal welfare organisations and anti-animal experimentation organisations). The recommendations from the organisations that were present during this meeting are listed in the advisory report, along with whether or not the NCad included these in its opinion.



Education and training

- seek assistance from the AOC Council (network of agricultural training) to abolish the use of dogs and cats as laboratory animals in all para-veterinary training programmes, without compromising the quality of these programmes;
- optimize the use of a donor card for pets by instructing the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) to provide all impounded dogs and cats with a donor card before these animals are offered for relocation and to encourage that all shelter animals are also provided with donor cards in the future;
- make an appeal to the animal protection organizations, veterinary practices, breeders and organizations that use dogs, such as the police, to promote the donor card and to donate deceased animals;
- facilitate the wider use of plastinated specimens by, for instance, donating dogs and cats that have been impounded by the NVWA, the Inspectorate of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals (LID) and the police, and that can no longer be relocated.

Fundamental research

The consequences of the implementation of the revised Experiments on Animals Act (Wet op de dierproeven), which entered into force in the Netherlands on 18 December 2014, are not yet visible in the NVWA's annual report of laboratory animal use. However, the centralized assessment of project applications, on which the Central Authority for Scientific Procedures on Animals (CCD) takes decisions, is expected to ensure that the use of animals in general, and more specifically dogs and cats in the context of this advice, will be carefully considered. Still, the use of new technologies and non-invasive techniques should be encouraged. The implementation of these technologies will reduce the use of animal testing, including the use of dogs and cats. Moreover, the exchange of tissue, organs and blood should be encouraged so that optimum use can be made of each animal.

Follow-up

The minister of Agriculture has embraced the opinion of the NCad and has initiated cooperation with chain partners to minimize the use of dogs and cats in fundamental research, regulatory testing, and education and training.

The full report Procedures using Cats and Dogs is available on the NCad website:

<https://english.ncadierproevenbeleid.nl/advice/documents/publications/16/11/28/ncad-opinion-procedures-usingcats-and-dogs>



Recommendations

The opinion is set up under three themes; research required by law, education, and fundamental research.

Research required by law

- undertake efforts to have the legal requirement for the batch/lot safety test for veterinary vaccines – which has already been abolished by the European Pharmacopoeia (EP) – waived outside Europe as well. Manufacturers can also initiate discussions with the supervisory authorities in third countries about having the safety test waived;
- undertake efforts at European level for the non-routine retesting of a batch/lot of a vaccine by the supervisory authority in one of the European Member States;
- ensure that the study on the approach to be adopted for the release of a batch/lot of a vaccine that is based on using non-animal testing methods (the consistency approach) is endorsed by the supervisory authorities in Europe;
- implementing bodies and regulators must be encouraged to exchange data on the use of animal models and alternative methods and, in the light of its role as a monitoring body, ask the Medicines Evaluation Board (MEB) that it should call applicants to account if they have failed to use alternative methods even though they were available.

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About the NCad

In 2014, The Netherlands National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (NCad) was appointed by the Minister of Agriculture for the protection of animals used for scientific and educational purposes. NCad aims to make a significant contribution to minimizing laboratory animal use, both at national and international level. This will involve giving (policy) advice, exchanging knowledge, and developing both national and international networks. The ethical review of animal procedures is of pivotal importance in this regard, as are the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement).