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NEWS RELEASE

50 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 9AT
Telephone 01-213 3030/4050/5050
(Night line 01-213 3000)

May 11, 1983

SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES ON LIVING ANIMALS

The Government's proposals for new legislation to replace the outdated Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 are set out in a White Paper "Scientific Procedures on Living Animals" published today*.

They represent a strengthening of the existing law which will ensure better protection for animals used in scientific procedures while permitting work essential in the interests of man and animal to continue.

The White Paper recognises that experiments upon living animals have to continue in the foreseeable future in order to protect man, animals and the environment. But animals must only be used in strictly defined circumstances and where there are no reasonable alternatives. They must have the best possible care and attention before and during their period in the laboratory. They must be spared all avoidable pain or distress. In no circumstances must they suffer severe and enduring pain. And the smallest practicable number of animals must be used.

The new legislation will enable the Government, in due course, to ratify a new Council of Europe Convention for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes which is nearing completion. The Convention allows member States to adopt stricter controls than those it contains and the White Paper's proposals are stricter in a number of respects, particularly in relation to the 'pain condition', to which no exception will be permitted in this country.

* Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Command 8883
HMSO £3.60.

There will be special measures to control the testing of cosmetics upon animals and to ensure that stray dogs and cats are not used in laboratories.

The White Paper proposes ten major changes in legislation:

- (i) Establishment of an Animal Procedures Committee. A new Committee will be established by statute to replace the existing non-statutory Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments. It will have wide powers to advise on questions of policy and procedure, including the development of alternatives to animals in experiments. It will also advise on applications which the Home Secretary refers to it as giving rise to special concern. It will advise on all applications for the testing of cosmetics. The Committee will make an annual report which will be presented to Parliament.
- (ii) Inclusion of additional procedures. The present legislation only covers experiments. Animals used for procedures such as breeding for physical defects, the production of antisera, passaging of tumours and interference with the embryo or foetus are excluded from control. The new legislation will be based on 'procedures' rather than 'experiments' and will protect animals used for such work.
- (iii) Extension of controls to animals being bred and supplied. The new controls will extend to establishments which breed and supply animals to laboratories. In most cases purpose-bred animals must be obtained from registered suppliers in scientific procedures. The use of stray dogs or cats will be prohibited.
- (iv) Care of animals in laboratories. Statutory protection will be given to animals at all times while they are in a laboratory and not just during an experiment, as at present. The advice of a veterinary surgeon must be available.
- (v) All work to require specific authorisation. New legislation will provide for rigorous examination of every proposed project using animals in order to satisfy certain criteria. Before the use of animals is permitted, the Home Secretary will have to be satisfied, among other things, that the work is justifiable; that no satisfactory alternative to the use of animals can be found; that the minimum possible number is used and that the least possible suffering is caused.

- (vi) Anaesthetics and analgesics. These must be used wherever possible.
- (vii) Use of animals for instructional purposes. Demonstrations will be permitted for a range of approved professional training but not in the education of school children or others at the same level.
- (viii) Procedures for the acquisition of manual skills. Surgeons seeking to acquire manual skill in microsurgery will be allowed to do so. But only under anaesthetic and with a requirement to use analgesia wherever necessary.
- (ix) Survival of animals after procedures. Animals will be allowed to survive after a procedure if they are fit to do so.
- (x) The Inspectorate. The Inspectorate has had a vital part to play in raising standards and spreading the best practice since its creation in 1876. It will be strengthened and have new and enhanced duties in operating the new controls over project and personal licences, laboratories and breeding and supplying establishments.