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# Home Office

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Professor Banner ✓  
Chairman  
Animal Procedures Committee  
Room 978, QAG  
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3 May 2001

Dear Michael

Thank you for your letter of 3 January presenting recommendations from the Animal Procedures Committee consultation on openness. I am sorry that you have not had an earlier reply.

I am grateful to the Committee for the time and thought that it has given to these important issues. My detailed thoughts on your recommendations are as follows.

*APC Recommendation 1: the Project Licence Application form*

As you will know, the recently revised Project Licence application form requires applicants to provide a plain English lay summary of the proposed programme of work giving insights into the hypotheses, technologies and models to be used. I note the Committee's recommendation that such summaries could be published and have asked officials to consider this further in the context of the current review of Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

*APC Recommendation 2: publication of results*

It is already Home Office policy to encourage publication of research findings, but we cannot require it. However, I agree that we need to do everything possible to ensure that there is no duplication of animal testing and I have asked my officials to examine possible mechanisms for publishing negative results as you suggest, consulting with the scientific community and others as necessary.

*APC Recommendation 3: no retrospective amendment to section 24*

I agree.

*APC Recommendation 4: increased openness regarding infringements*

I agree in principle that we should publish more detailed anonymised information on infringements and have asked officials to take this forward. I understand that the Committee has previously agreed that publication of material related to actual infringements should not be published in its annual report and that for that reason it is published as part of the Statistics of Scientific Procedures of Living Animals Great Britain.

*APC Recommendation 5: increased openness in statistical reporting*

The content and format of the annual statistics is kept under continuous review in line with the requirements of the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This year's statistics, to be published and presented to Parliament in the summer, will include an invitation to readers to submit comments and will be followed by wider consultation with the scientific community (who provide the data) and with other interested parties. The Committee's proposals, and any others it wishes to put forward, will be taken into account as part of that process.

Summary information regarding the performance of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate, together with licensing information, is published as part of the annual statistics report and Home Office Annual Report. These publications, the scientific and the laboratory animal science and welfare literature and the Home Office web-sites also contain material produced by the Inspectorate.

*APC Recommendation 6: additional voluntary openness*

The suggestion that licensed establishments should be encouraged to open their facilities to the responsible public to assist public debate is helpful. I have been keen to encourage the scientific community to present its work more effectively to the public. Participation and decisions about the practicalities would, of course, have to remain a matter for the relevant organisations.

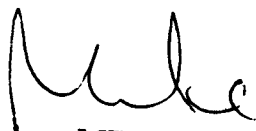
*APC Recommendation 7: APC involvement in special investigations*

It is my intention that the advice provided by quality assurance panels appointed in connection with future special investigations by the Inspectorate should be published.

*APC Recommendation 8: APC interaction with other bodies*

I am sure that interaction between the APC and other similar committees and bodies will be helpful and look forward to seeing more detailed proposals in the APC work programme.

Yours sincerely



MIKE O'BRIEN