

Where it counts

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has been publishing the annual laboratory animal statistics since 2021.

The German Animal Welfare Act sets strict requirements for animal experiments and the handling of laboratory animals in Germany. The competent authorities at the federal state level are responsible for the approval and control of experiments. The publication of annual laboratory animal statistics is also regulated: since 2021, this task has been the responsibility of the German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals at the BfR. Previously, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture was responsible for this.

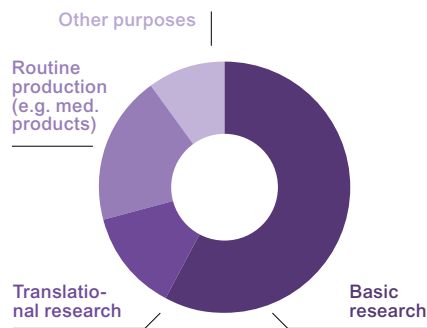
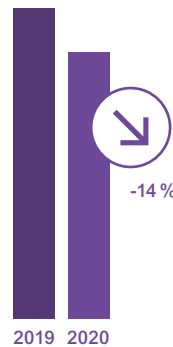
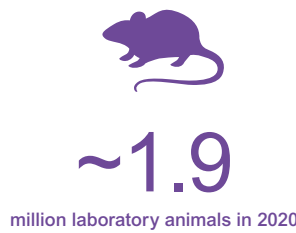
Number of laboratory animals used decreases significantly

According to the statistics, the number of laboratory animals used in 2020 fell significantly by about 14 per cent compared to the previous year. A total of around 1.9 million vertebrates and cephalopods were used in experiments (according to Section 7 para. 2 of the German Animal Welfare Act). The statistics list which, and how many, laboratory animals were used and for what purposes experiments were carried out. About 58 per cent of the laboratory animals used were for basic research (for example, for studies of the immune and nervous systems) and about 13 per cent for research into diseases (for example, cancer) in humans and animals. About 19 per cent of the animals were used in the production or quality control of medical products or for toxicological safety tests (for example on the efficacy or safety of drugs and vaccines). About 10 per cent were needed for other purposes, such as education and training, or for breeding genetically modified animals.

Strictly regulated procedure

What data are the statistics based on? Scientists in Germany are obliged to report the number of laboratory animals used as well as other information, such as the species and origin of the animals, the purpose of the experiments or the severity of the exposure, to the competent authority at federal state level. The state authorities send all reports from the respective German federal states to the BfR in Berlin. And so in the end, the figures from all over Germany are compiled there. The team led by Professor Dr Gilbert Schönfelder, head of the German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals at the BfR, checks the data for plausibility, processes it and sends it to the EU Commission in Brussels. The Commission in turn publishes the figures of all EU Member States in the freely accessible international statistics database ALURES. The “ALURES NTS” database contains the information on approved animal experiments in the EU. In addition to this, there is also the BfR’s “AnimalTestInfo” portal, which provides information on approved animal testing projects in Germany. “When deciding whether to approve an animal experiment, the responsible authorities al-

ways check beforehand whether the objective cannot be achieved by other methods or procedures,” Schönfelder emphasises. ■



More information:
www.bf3r.de > English > Offers > Laboratory animal numbers 2020