

Symposium October 2009:

*20th Anniversary of
ZEBET at BfR*

and 50 Years of the 3Rs Principle



Perspective of the German Animal Welfare Federation

Dr. Brigitte Rusche

Vice President German Animal Welfare Federation

Director, Animal Welfare Academy, Neubiberg





kurz vor der Be-
freiung



ein Jahr nach der Befreiung

20 years ago, there was agreement between the pharmaceutical industry and the animal welfare movement that some kind of a central institution was needed to promote the development and application of alternative methods.

Since 1994 ZEBET is supported by an advisory commission. Its membership consists of delegates of the animal protection organisations, the pharmaceutical and chemical industries, the competent regional authorities and, as rapporteurs, delegates of the relevant ministries.

The ZEBET-Commission is a forum for information and discussions and provides recommendations for the work and the priorities of ZEBET.

Suggestions of the Commission are addressed to the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment and have the status of recommendations.

- In the first years, ZEBET's role was to give alternatives an official voice and to help overcoming fundamental objections against alternatives. In the meantime alternatives or rather the principle of the 3Rs are much better accepted.

- 20 years ago in Germany there was no official database on the 3R. Meanwhile ZEBET's database has become a helpful instrument not only to scientists or authorities but also to members of ethical committees to decide on the ethical justification of research proposals involving the use of live animals.

- Several national and international symposia gained importance because of ZEBET involvement.

ZEBET contributed tremendously in the field of alternatives by

- encouraging and supporting – also financially – scientists in developing alternatives
- being evolved in the development of international validation strategies and in validation projects

ZEBET contributed tremendously in the field of alternatives by

- helping to face out of non suitable or useless test procedures with animals like abnormal toxicity testing...
... or the use of dogs as a second species for the safety evaluation and registration of plant protection products
... or mouse assays for mussel toxins

ZEBET's tasks today are more relevant than ever. Fortunately since 2005, even in the coalition agreements of the federal government is stated that animals experiments should be replaced by alternative methods as far as possible and that ongoing efforts are essential.

What is still needed is another type of co-operation: ZEBET's obligatory involvement in any and all decisions relevant to the field of animal experiments and alternatives. More than in the past ZEBET must be given the role of a co-ordinating point, e.g. for other governmental institutions concerned with problems of consumer or environmental protection.

Issues where ZEBET should take a substantiated position:

- Alternatives still have a way to go to full acceptance. ZEBET should foster cooperation to that end between all stakeholders.

Issues where ZEBET should take a substantiated position:

- At ZEBET, there is the expertise to raise factually supported criticism of animal experiments in various scientific areas, ZEBET is capable of delivering facts and data for the discussion of animal experimentation on a societal/political level, and provide support for alternatives in the process of drafting legislation.

Issues where ZEBET should take a substantiated position:

- Also, it can and should supply information and advice with regard to applications for animal experiments submitted to the licensing authorities. This should be obligatory, at least for contentious cases, and members of ethics committees should have the possibility to obtain expert statements from ZEBET.

Issues where ZEBET should take a substantiated position:

- Finally, it should go on acting as a national partner of ECVAM and cooperating with the other relevant institutions.

For all stakeholders, ZEBET should also be a focus point for the exchange of knowledge and opinion, and act as mediator between industry and science on one hand and regulatory authorities on the other.

The animal welfare community would like to see ZEBET as a powerful institution equipped accordingly and as a communication centre in order to save as many animals as possible from the fate of becoming experimental testing systems.



Thank you for your attention!