

## SFI Policy on the Use of Animals in Research

Science Foundation Ireland's policy concerning use of animals in research is informed by European legislation outlined in [Directive 2010/63/EU](#). This legislation was transposed into Irish law in December 2012 by [SI No 543 of 2012](#) and is implemented by the [Health Products Regulatory Authority \(HPRA\)](#), the competent authority in Ireland responsible for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.

Science Foundation Ireland aims to improve the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes and to promote the principles of the 3Rs - Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (See Figure 1). Applicants are expected to adhere to the general principles and best practice outlined in the guidance provided by the HPRA<sup>1</sup> and are advised to consult the ARRIVE guidelines<sup>2</sup> (Animal Research: Reporting *In Vivo* Experiments) produced by the UK National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs).

Where research funded by SFI involves the use of animals, the following requirements must be met.

- The Research Body and Principal Investigator must ensure that, before the research commences and for the full award duration, all the necessary ethical, legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and all the necessary licences and approvals have been obtained.
- The Research Body and Principal Investigator must ensure that research involving the use of animals is conducted with such ethical guidelines and codes of practice as may be published or adopted by SFI, any relevant industry or any competent regulatory body from time to time, including those described in this policy.
- SFI will support research using animals providing that it is fully compliant with the requirements of the HPRA, it has been independently peer reviewed and consideration has been given to the use of alternative approaches not involving the use of live animals and addressing the principles of the 3R's (replacement, reduction, refinement).
- Applicants to SFI, whose research proposals include the use of animals, must fully justify the experimental design and its suitability to address the research questions posed in the appropriate section of their application. Applicants must provide detailed justification for their choice of design, intervention and numbers of animals to be used. Sufficient information concerning methodological issues must be provided.
- If any research is to be carried out in a third country, the Research Body must ensure that research involving the use of animals is carried out in the spirit of Irish legislation and complies at all times with the relevant laws and regulations in the host country.

These requirements apply whether or not the animals are to be purchased with funds requested within the proposal itself.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hpra.ie/homepage/veterinary/scientific-animal-protection>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines>

**Figure 1. The 3Rs - Replacement, Reduction and Refinement**

## Replacement

- Using alternative methods that do not require the use of live vertebrate animals
- *Examples include* - *in vitro* tests such as cell lines, computer simulation and modelling, video material, or the use of invertebrates such as fruit flies or worms.

## Reduction

- Using the most appropriate number of animals for each project required to obtain statistically robust data without using more animals than necessary.
- *Examples include* - Improved experimental design and statistical analysis; data and resource sharing; and use of techniques such as imaging.

## Refinement

- Where there is no alternative to the use of live animals, investigators must ensure that suffering is minimised and the highest standards of animal welfare and care are applied.
- *Examples include* - careful handling by trained individuals, provision of high standards of housing and husbandry to include enrichment materials and the appropriate use of anaesthesia and pain relief during procedures.

*Last Updated June 2016.*