



UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

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Media Release

**From the
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)**

10th July, 2007

For Immediate Release:

Award for research into assessment of stress and distress in laboratory rodents

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) has announced a major award to support a research project that has potential for a very significant impact on the welfare of rodents used in research and testing procedures.

The UFAW 3Rs Liaison Group has awarded a Research Studentship to Claire Richardson of Newcastle University for a three-year project to develop an objective technique for assessing stress and distress in rodents in order to minimise negative welfare impact of research procedures.

“A major aim of the project will be to develop techniques for use with mice as these are by far the most commonly used animal in research and testing laboratories,” says Robert Hubrecht, UFAW’s Deputy Director. “It has been estimated that more than 25 million mice are used worldwide in laboratories each year. The ability to objectively assess the affect of procedures used on these animals, and through that to refine those procedures, would therefore have an enormous impact on laboratory animal welfare, as well as improving the scientific validity of the research.”

Ms Richardson’s research will involve further development of a concept pioneered at Bristol University, and taken forward at Newcastle, called ‘cognitive bias’. The hypothesis is that animals respond in measurably different ways to ambivalent reward signals depending on how they feel, and from this it should be possible to develop objective criteria to apply to a range of research procedures to assess the levels of stress involved, and, importantly, the beneficial effect of refinements to those procedures. “Currently assessment is often subjective or relies on measures that can be difficult to interpret,” says Hubrecht. “The new assessment technique would be much more sensitive to the animal’s feelings and, if successful, will be a major input into application of the Three Rs.”

The UFAW 3Rs Liaison Group, established by UFAW in 1998, is a coalition of animal welfare organisations, pharmaceutical companies and research organisations. Its aim is to improve the welfare of laboratory animals by identifying and funding research leading to practical solutions that advance welfare. It also provides a valuable training opportunity for young scientists in the field of laboratory animal welfare.

The Group is an important initiative in UFAW’s work of promoting the Three Rs – Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of the use of animals in research. The present award is the Group’s fifth Studentship awarded to graduates based at research institutions in the British Isles to undertake three-year programmes in any aspect of the Three Rs leading to a degree at doctorate level.

-ENDS-

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Chief Executive and Scientific Director: James K Kirkwood BVSc PhD CBiol FIBiol MRCVS

Secretary: Donald C Davidson

Registered Charity No. 207996 (Registered in England) and Company Limited by Guarantee No. 579991



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Note to Editors:

The current members of the UFAW 3Rs Liaison Group are:

AstraZeneca
Covance
GlaxoSmithKline
Harlan UK
Inveresk
Merck Sharp & Dohm
National Centre for the Three Rs (NC3Rs)
Novartis
Pfizer
RSPCA
Sanofi-Aventis
UFAW

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

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