



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11 February 2019

MILESTONE IN ANIMAL WELFARE REACHED

11 February 1955 saw the foundations laid of more humane laboratory techniques for animals

Dr William Russell presented a paper entitled *A research on the history and progress of humane experimental techniques* on this day at the UFAW Annual General Meeting in 1955. This paper, published in UFAW's technical news-sheet the UFAW Courier, contained the essence of the principles that were to become known as the Three Rs – Replacement, Reduction and Refinement. Dr Russell concluded his presentation by saying: "*I believe it (this investigation) is also one of immense promise for the welfare of large numbers of animals, and I can only hope that its outcome will be as gratifying to look back on as the other achievements we have heard about tonight.*"

Previously, UFAW had stated that it wanted to see laboratory techniques become more humane for the animals concerned and made contact with Dr William Russell, an Oxford zoologist and Greek scholar, who agreed to undertake a programme of research into this subject. Dr Russell was appointed as a UFAW Research Fellow in October 1954. Mr Rex Burch, a skilled microbiologist, was taken on soon after and collected much of the information necessary for the project.

Two years later, the first ever symposium on *Humane Techniques in the Laboratory* was organised by UFAW at Birkbeck College, London on the 8th of May 1957. It was at this meeting that Russell and Burch's Three Rs principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement were first formally put forward. Sixty years ago this year, in 1959, *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* was published, which comprehensively laid out the arguments that lay behind their seminal concept. Over subsequent decades, the Three Rs were taken up around the world as fundamental guiding principles in laboratory animal welfare legislation and practice.

UFAW has worked since its foundation in 1926 to improve the welfare of animals used in research by supporting scientific studies to understand and improve their welfare

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE



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alongside education and training to improve the lives of animals used for scientific purposes worldwide.

Today, huge advances have been made in the treatment of animals used for scientific purposes. Nonetheless, there is much more that remains to be done to advance all of the 3Rs. Research is needed to develop refinements to experimental techniques to reduce suffering and to find further ways to replace and reduce the use of animals in research. Our knowledge about animals' needs in captivity also needs to be expanded to inform legal standards worldwide. It is likely that new challenges to animal welfare may also arise as new technologies are developed. As long as animals are used in scientific testing and research, UFAW will play a crucial role in ensuring that animal suffering in the name of science is minimised or eradicated through the development and application of animal welfare. See <https://www.ufaw.org.uk/why-ufaws-work-is-important/welfare-of-animals-used-in-scientific-testing-and-research> for further information.

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Note to editors:

The 3Rs – the 3Rs principles suggest that there are three ways to lessen the impact of scientific research on animals:

1. **Replace** animals with other ways of gaining the knowledge required (by using computer models, tissue culture, artificial organs etc. to understand biological processes)
2. **Reduce** the number of animals used to achieve the results (for example by doing more efficient experiments which use fewer animals)
3. **Refine** the way animals are treated to minimise any impacts upon them (the aim being to cause less suffering to the animals or to improve their welfare whilst still achieving the scientific aims)

UFAW has supported developments in all of the 3Rs which have resulted in improvements to the welfare of millions of animals.

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.

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

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