

Minister C.J. Schouten  
Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit  
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Minister I.K. van Engelshoven  
Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap  
P.O. Box 16375  
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The Netherlands

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to you on behalf of the European Animal Research Association (EARA) in response to the statement from the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, who has declared a wish to see biomedical research using Non-Human Primates (NHP), in the Netherlands, phased out as soon as possible.

EARA has been established to inform the European public on the continued need for, and benefits of, the responsible use of animals in biomedical research. It seeks to provide support, advocacy and reliable communication on behalf of public and private organisations at both national and European levels. Our membership is drawn from more than 70 Institutions including pharmaceutical companies, contract research organisations, animal breeders and public research institutions across Europe, including the Biomedical Primate Research Centre (BPRC), in the Netherlands.

The biomedical sector believes that if an artificial limit is placed on the number of NHP used in research in the Netherlands, it is highly likely to severely limit the progress that can be made in both fundamental research and the development of innovative medicines and treatments for life-threatening diseases and infectious disease control.

Presently, the use of animals in research, especially NHP, is highly regulated and under EU Directive 2010/63 no animal can be used if there is any practical alternative method. The Scientific Committee on Health Environmental and Emerging Risks (SCHEER) confirmed in its 2017 updated opinion, the continued need and benefit of the use of NHP in research, and stated, “the current state of knowledge does not permit to propose a timetable for phasing-out the use of NHP in Europe”. That said, research primates continue to be used in relatively small numbers (currently 0.05% of all research animal used in the EU) but they have made an extremely important contribution to many significant medical advances, for example the polio vaccine, life support systems for premature babies and deep brain stimulation for Parkinson’s Disease.

Currently the main areas of primate study are infectious diseases, neuroscience and fertility and foetal research. Primates are an important model for the development of vaccines and treatments for HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Zika and malaria and for investigations into treatments for conditions ranging

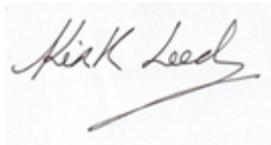


from Alzheimer's disease to Schizophrenia. They are also used in safety testing for new medicines and vaccines.

The research community is fully committed to the 3Rs principles: replacement; reduction; and refinement and we support the minister's call for greater sharing of data in research with laboratory animals, including the publishing negative results, which is in line with the sector's own desire for greater transparency and openness. The sector actively seeks opportunities to replace animal studies with alternative methods, to design studies that enable us to reduce the number of animals needed to obtain a scientifically valid result and to refine studies to minimise pain and distress to the animals involved. This has already led to a significant reduction in the numbers of animals used, of all species, in recent years.

We would be happy to meet and discuss this matter with responsible contacts from the Dutch government at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



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