

Euro-MP welcomes greater protection for animals

SNP Member of the European Parliament, Ian Hudghton, has welcomed a decision taken in the Brussels parliament today, which will bring about measures to improve the protection of animals used in experiments in the European Union.

Mr Hudghton, whose mailbag frequently includes letters calling for a halt to animal testing in laboratory experiments, and who, personally through his work in the European Parliament, supports moves to enhance animal welfare throughout the EU commented:

"Each year around 12 million animals are used in the EU in scientific experiments – far too many by anyone's estimate. Advances in science have moved on to such an extent that there are now many alternatives to animal experiments. There is also a huge amount of data already available, which could be shared which is why I support proposals to establish an EU-wide scientific database to ensure that unnecessary animal experiments do not have to be replicated over and over again.

Members of the public do not like to see animals suffer in laboratory experiments and I do believe that the majority of Scots would rather that animal experiments were an exception to the rule rather than normal scientific practice. Today's report, led in Parliament by my Plaid Cymru colleague Jill Evans MEP, was backed by a large majority of MEP's. It means that EU countries now have to come up with incentives to develop the use of alternatives to the use of live animals in laboratory experiments, thus greatly reducing the number of animals condemned to suffer. I was delighted to lend my support to this initiative."

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

The report calls for a standard EU inspectorate to be established that will have the powers to inspect any premises where animals are being used for experimentation - both private and public, without any prior warning, and to revoke the license of any establishment not adhering to the rules. It also demands that the use of wild animals in experiments should be stopped, and for a critical evaluation of the use of non-human primates, with the intention of reducing and eventually ending their use.

The report reminds the European Commission that it has agreed to begin the process of updating Directive 86/609, controlling animal experiments, before the end of 2003.