



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

The Importance of Federal Funding for Animal Research

Request: APA encourages Congress to continue support for research with animals, and to oppose bills or amendments that argue against all research with animals.

The significance of federal support for research with animals cannot be overstated.

Animal research plays an integral role in scientific studies relevant not only to furthering our basic understanding and knowledge about biology and behavior, but also to informing clinical practice and public health policy. It is imperative that federal funding for such research remain at an appropriate level so that scientists can continue conducting essential research that benefits both humans and other animals.

Basic research with animals is vital.

Findings from animal research in psychology and related sciences continue to play a key role in our understanding of behavior and brain-body relationships. Studies using a wide range of animals were foundational—and remain critical—to identifying basic mechanisms that underlie healthy development and functioning. Research with a wide variety of animals including fish, birds, rodents, and non-human primates have contributed to our understanding of fundamental processes such as learning, memory, cognition, communication, motivation, and emotion. The benefits of basic research are realized over both short and long timespans, with basic discoveries providing the essential fundamental knowledge for breakthroughs in tackling many of the health challenges confronting society, including obesity, substance abuse, mental disorders, and violence.

Animal welfare is a priority.

Research conducted with animals is highly regulated at the local, state and federal levels. The number one priority for the team of scientists, veterinarians, animal care personnel and university-based institutional animal care and use committees is ensuring the welfare and humane treatment of animals used in ethically and scientifically sound research. In addition to honoring their ethical obligation, scientists maintain the highest standards of animal care to ensure that research results are scientifically valid. At the federal level, animal research is overseen by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Animal Care Unit, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare. In addition voluntary accreditation bodies, such as the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, International (AAALAC) also set and enforce standards for the use of animals in research. This multi-level system of oversight ensures the highest standards for humane care and treatment of animals in research.

Animal research IS in the public interest.

Findings from basic research with animals serve as building blocks for applied research that aims to understand, prevent, and treat various health conditions that affect humans and/or other animals. For example, animal research has played a vital role in our understanding of neurochemical mechanisms that underlie various conditions, including depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, substance abuse, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease. This knowledge is critical in the development of both prevention and treatment programs for such diseases. In addition, given the public's interest in animal welfare issues, it should be noted that by working with and studying other species, behavioral scientists inform best practices for addressing the health and welfare needs of not only laboratory animals but also animals in other settings such as zoos, farms, and family pets in the home. It is, therefore, in the public interest to support animal research so that progress in science can continue to advance understanding of basic mechanisms underlying behavior, and develop and deliver treatments to improve the health and wellbeing of both people and other animals.

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