



MEDIA RELEASE

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COUNTING ON ANIMAL CRUELTY? Number of animals used in research in Australia gets more difficult to determine.

The latest national statistics for the use of animals in research have been collated, but with so many 'loopholes' in states' reporting, it is difficult to portray an accurate picture of how many animals are actually used in experiments in this country.

According to the latest figures obtained by Humane Research Australia, the number of animals used during 2008 was 5,116,787; however, Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Territory figures have not been made available. Therefore, using the last available figures from those states (589,047 in 2004 for Qld and 1,049,379 in 2007 for WA), this would bring the total number of animals used to more than 6.7 million.

The figure includes 445 primates and 5,672 dogs, as well as native animals, fish, stock animals and poultry, in addition to those commonly associated with laboratory use – rabbits, rats, mice and guinea pigs.

The procedures ranged from 'Observational studies involving minor interference' to 'Major physiological challenge', 'Production of genetically modified animals' and 'Death as an end point'.

New South Wales and Victoria have recorded the highest numbers used – 3,261,386 and 1,216,393 respectively.

A full breakdown of the figures is available at www.aahr.org.au/statistics.html

Chief Executive Officer, Helen Marston, said today *"It's disappointing that Western Australia and Queensland no longer provide their state statistics and one can only wonder what they have to hide."*

"If, as stated by the WA Minister for Local Government, collation of data is too 'resource intensive', then perhaps they should reconsider issuing licenses to experiment in the first place."

The extrapolation of data from animals to humans can be dangerously misleading due to anatomic, genetic and metabolic differences. It is therefore not the most efficacious method of medical research. Australia should be investing in the development and validation of more humane and scientifically valid research methods – as occurs in Europe and the United States.

Ms Marston concluded *"Australia has a notorious record of using large numbers of animals in experiments compared with other nations, but rather than commit to reducing the number used, some states seem to have opted to conceal the figures instead."*