UK Government’s consultation on repeal of secrecy clause that hides away the grisly world of animal experiments.

Consultation closes on 13th June 2014.

Please respond to the UK Government’s Consultation on the secrecy clause (section 24) within the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which prevents the public from knowing what is being done to animals in experiments, why it’s being done and the results.

You don’t need to respond to every question in order to participate in the consultation and it will only take you a few minutes as many of them are multiple choice. To help you, we’ve compiled a list of suggested responses to the key questions which you can simply copy, paste and amend if you wish.

Naturewatch Foundation is supporting Option 2a. However, our comments reflect the fact that we believe only the names and personal details of the scientists involved and the location where the experiments take place should be withheld. All other information should be publicly available.

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Question 1: Do you believe we should retain Section 24 in its current form?

Suggested response: No

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Question 2: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option meets the government’s primary objective of increasing openness and transparency about the use of animals in scientific research?

Suggested response: To some extent

Comment: I believe only the names and personal details of the scientists involved and the location where the experiments take place should be withheld. All other information should be publicly available.

Question 3: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option appropriately clarifies who and what is covered by the legislation?

Suggested response: To some extent

Questions 4 & 5: You don’t need to answer these questions.

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Question 6: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option meets the government’s primary objective of increasing openness and transparency about the use of animals in scientific research?

Suggested response: Not at all

Question 7: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option appropriately clarifies who and what is covered by the legislation?

Suggested response: Not at all
Question 8: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option provides appropriate protection for sensitive information (eg, people and place details and intellectual property)?

Suggested response: Not at all

Question 9: Do you agree that the additional statutory prohibition on disclosure is necessary to protect certain types of sensitive information?

Suggested response: Not at all

Question 10: You don’t need to answer this question

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Question 11: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option meets the government’s primary objective of increasing openness and transparency about the use of animals in scientific research?

Suggested response: To some extent

Question 12: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option appropriately clarifies who and what is covered by the legislation?

Suggested response: To some extent

Question 13: To what extent do you believe, if at all, that this option provides appropriate protection for sensitive information (eg, people and place details and intellectual property)?

Suggested response: To some extent

Comment: I believe only the names and personal details of the scientists involved and the location where the experiments take place should be withheld. All other information should be publicly available.

Question 14: You don’t need to answer this question.

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Questions 15, 16 & 17: You don’t need to answer these questions.

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Question 18: With regards to options 2a and 2b, in what instances do you believe disclosure of information about the use of animals in scientific research is malicious? Please provide comments to explain your answer, using clear examples where possible.

Comment: In my opinion, the only occasion when disclosure of information about the use of animals in scientific research could be considered malicious is if it wasn’t factual.

Question 19: What do you believe should be covered by the term ‘intellectual property’? Please provide comments to explain your answer.

Comment: I believe only the names and personal details of the scientists involved and the location where the experiments take place should be withheld. All other information should be publicly available.

Question 20: Do you consider that Section 24 of ASPA, being a statutory bar and an absolute exemption, provides greater protection for intellectual property than other qualifying FOIA exemptions?
Suggested response: I believe Section 24 goes too far and should be repealed as it prevents openness and transparency which is out of step with government policy. I believe only the names and personal details of the scientists involved and the location where the experiments take place should be withheld. All other information should be publicly available.

**Question 21:** Are there any other views or comments that you would like to add in relation to the review of Section 24 that were not covered by the other questions in this consultation?

**Comment:**

I believe that Section 24 has hidden away the world of animal experiments for far too long. It’s stifled debate and prevented scientific and ethical scrutiny of the use of animals in research, which has been bad for science and for the animals.

I am also concerned that the secrecy has led to animals suffering in experiments when there may well have been a suitable non-animal testing method available.

I want to see the government doing more to divert funds away from tests that involve animals and towards non-animal alternatives.

I want to see the government investing more money into researching, developing and validating non-animal testing methods and suggest that the introduction of a levy per animal used would be a simple way of achieving this at no cost to the government. I believe the levy would need to be ring-fenced by the treasury to ensure the charge is not classified as a tax.

In the meantime, I want to see the government doing everything within its power to encourage the sharing of experiment results as this will reduce the duplication of tests and therefore reduce the number of animals being used.

**Question 22:** Which of the following best describes the organisation or professional interest that you represent? Please state the name of the organisation in the box below.

Please select ‘a member of an animal protection organisation’ and in the box under ‘Name of institution or organisation’, please enter ‘Naturewatch Foundation’.

And that’s it, you’ve finished! On behalf of the animals caught up in the nightmare world of animal experiments, we thank you for participating in this very important consultation to lift the veil of secrecy.