

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

May 2016

Dear Constituent,

Thanks for contacting me about the use of dogs in experiments.

In the UK, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is the responsible authority for the assessment and licensing of medical products. EU pharmaceutical legislation requires that before a new medicine is granted a licence, a battery of tests, using both animal and non-animal methods, are conducted to establish the toxicity profiles for the medicine. The legislation requires that new medicines are generally tested in a rodent and a non-rodent species before human clinical trials can begin. As a result of adverse findings from animal studies, a large number of drug candidates do not progress to being tested in humans.

I understand your concern for the welfare of dogs, but this testing is undertaken to provide assurance of the safety of medicines before they are given to humans. Removing testing could compromise human safety, which I do think would be unacceptable. Dogs are still important in the development and safety testing of new medicines.

However the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 does give dogs a special status whereby they can only be used if there is no alternative research model and if their use can be justified. In fact, whenever possible dogs are not used in favour of other animal species. The Government's annual statistics show that in 2014 less than 0.1 percent of animals used in research in Great Britain are dogs. Since 2010 the number of procedures performed on dogs has dropped nearly 30 percent from 5,782 in 2010 to 4,107 in 2014, a welcome reduction that I hope continues.

I very much support the ongoing work to develop alternatives to the second species test. However at the moment in some cases there are no practicable alternatives.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY