

FOR LIFE ON EARTH

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Properly Moderated Public Scientific Debate

Dear Understanding Animal Research,

Thank you for your letter dated 6th May. We are delighted to receive your suggestion that all aspects of animal experimentation should be debated and absolutely agree to participate in properly moderated, public scientific debates regarding each of the nine accepted main ways animals are used in science, as outlined on our website [here](#). Please let us know if you would like to suggest any additional uses of animal experimentation, and we will debate those too.

For very obvious and practical reasons it will not be possible to do justice to this entire field by squashing together each aspect of animal experimentation into one debate. In light of the 30 debates you organised last year, we propose nine debates this year, covering each of the main ways animals are used in science. Parliamentary EDM 263 focuses on the claimed 'predictive' value of animal experiments for human patients, and to honour the MPs who have signed this motion, subsequent to your initiating the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research (highlighted in your letter), we will agree to debate this aspect first.

The latest [Home Office figures](#) show the still very great extent to which animal experiments are claimed 'predictive' models in human 'applied' studies. Eighty-five per cent of all Beagles - that's 2,647 individual dogs - were used in such studies (essentially for the toxicity testing of new human medicines and ADME studies). Indeed eighty-eight percent of non-human primates were experimented on for such 'applied' studies as were seventy-three percent of all rats.

It is unfortunate we have to point out that your comments regarding Britain's leading human rights defence barrister, Michael Mansfield QC, fall into the fallacy known as [ad hominem](#): personal choices about lifestyle and charity support are wholly irrelevant to a professional endorsement of the conditions for objective scientific debate, called for by Parliamentarians who have signed EDM 263 (most of whom, in addition, choose to be meat eating, non-'animal rights' people). In response to Henry Fawcett opining that some scientists thought Darwin should just let the facts speak for themselves, instead of pointing out the implications, Darwin responded: "How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service" ([Letter, C. R. Darwin to H. Fawcett, 18 September 1861](#)). Milner's quote from Darwin is also appropriate here:

Darwin was well pleased with Huxley's aggressive campaign to win over public opinion in 1860, just after Huxley had bested Wilberforce. Darwin stressed the "enormous importance of showing the world that a few first-rate men are not afraid of expressing their opinion. . . . I see daily more and more plainly that my unaided book would have done absolutely nothing." (Milner, Richard. 2009. *Darwin's Universe: Evolution from A to Z*: University of California Press. P122.)

We understand that nine debates under the rules listed [here](#) will be challenging but as Steven Novella, MD, neurologist at Yale [recently pointed out](#): "Although interesting, debates are terrible venues for carefully dissecting the evidence. There is no time to look up references and check claims. Two times Eben Alexander and I came to an "impasse" and had to simply move on." This is the situation that we are sure both sides wish to avoid and as such we insist that the rules be followed. Michael Mansfield's view on this is relevant per his history in law. I am sure all of us could find others who agree with these rules.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to a constructive series of debates that will honour Parliament's growing support and reflect the spirit of the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Groves, Alex Irving, Deborah Minns and Louise Owen.

Directors (respectively of) [Human Rights: Patient Group](#); [NO to Animal Experiments](#) (comprising the campaigns [Save the Harlan Beagles](#) and [Oppose B & K Universal](#)), and their flagship, the science-based Parliamentary campaign [For Life On Earth](#).