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## Survey about the 3Rs in Australia

The NHMRC is conducting a survey about the replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of the use of animals for scientific purposes in Australia.

As most people with an interest in this area would be aware, one of the biggest problems facing an informed debate about the 3Rs would be a serious lack of accurate information about what has been done in this area around Australia and / or New Zealand over time. Even now, there is limited, current documented evidence about the use of the 3Rs in Australia and factors that enable or hinder their development and adoption. To address this information gap, NHMRC is seeking to obtain evidence about current practices via a survey of:

- investigators who are currently involved with the use of animals, or have been involved with the use of animals some time during the last three years

- current members of an animal ethics committee; and
- institutional representatives - senior person who is responsible for overall institutional governance with respect to the care and use of animals (as per Clause 2.1.5 [1] of the Code).

Broad dissemination of the information about the survey to members of the target groups will help to ensure that the results represent an accurate picture of the current situation about the use of the 3Rs in Australia.

Not surprisingly, ANZCCART offers our strong support to this survey and we look forward to learning the results of it later this year. This is why we are more than happy to accede to the NHMRC's request to include the information below in this edition of ANZCCART News and we encourage those who meet the eligibility criteria listed in this announcement to participate in the survey.



## Survey about the 3Rs in Australia

ORIMA Research is conducting a survey on the replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of the use of animals for scientific purposes in Australia.

### About the survey

Concerns are sometimes raised about the level of adherence and attention paid to the 3Rs in Australia. However, there is limited documented evidence of the use the 3Rs in Australia and factors that support or hinder their development and adoption. To address this information gap, views and advice about current practices are being sought from those directly involved.

The survey is being conducted by [ORIMA Research](#) on behalf of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

### Eligibility

You are eligible to participate in the survey if you are:

- an investigator who is currently involved with the use of animals in Australia, or has been involved with the use of animals in Australia sometime during the last three years
- a current member of an Australian animal ethics committee
- an Australian institutional representative — senior person who is responsible for overall institutional governance with respect to the care and use of animals (as per Clause 2.1.5 [1] of the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#)).

### How to participate

If you have been identified as a potential participant in the survey, you will receive an invitation via an email from NHMRC, your institution or the government department in your state/territory that is responsible for animal welfare. This email will contain all of the information you need, including how to access the survey.

If you believe that you are eligible to take part in the survey, and have not received an invitation, you should contact the relevant section of your institution or the relevant government department in your state/territory.

### How the survey results be used

The results from the survey will assist NHMRC with the development of an Information Paper presenting evidence about the current situation in Australia regarding the 3Rs, to promote informed discussion of any issues and guide recommendations for improvement if required.

The survey is open until by **5PM AEDT Monday 28 May 2018**.

More information about the survey is available on [NHMRC's website](#).

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## 2018 ANZCCART Conference

24 to 26 July

Canberra, Australia

ANZCCART would like to announce that the  
Call for Abstracts is now open.

**Closing date is Monday 4 June**

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Conference registration is now open.

**Early bird registrations close Friday 18 May**

For further information and to register visit:

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/>

## Can Ethics Committees provide improved monitoring advice for wildlife?

*Tim White*

Work that involves the use of wildlife can mean that researchers and animal ethics committees (AEC) alike may face some challenges when it comes to ensuring that the monitoring of animal welfare standards is adequate to meet best practice. While the challenges may vary with different environments, monitoring in the wild and even within more confined areas is fraught with difficulties. Even wildlife released to a contained habitat or large semi-wild enclosures whilst under study will often have reduced monitoring compared with research animals held in purpose built facilities. The fact that wild animals are also often hard to capture, or may be stressed by capture, can make physical examinations difficult. Wild animals can mask signs of pain or discomfort more than domesticated animals and assessing them when captured for monitoring can be difficult and requires expert knowledge to interpret signs.

Determining if animals have a disease or if their health is compromised in any way is essential to control for study variability and can impact on the accuracy of the results obtained. Feedback on diseases can also lead to further insights that can improve threatened species welfare and management.

There are however some potential solutions available so the aforementioned monitoring shortcomings can potentially be improved by use of an untapped resource with thousands of volunteers across the country, namely wildlife rescuers and carers.

One fairly simple measure that could be implemented might be for AECs to suggest that researchers contact local wildlife organisations prior to research beginning so they can report any sick animals under study. The wildlife organisations could then be contacted again at the end of the study so they can check their records for any other injured animals that may not have been sent through to researchers. Members of these groups could also be asked to particularly focus on and notify the institution about any sick or injured animals found that have identification markings of any kind, in case such markings indicate participation in a study.

In collaborating with wildlife rescuers/carers it should also be recognised that these people are usually volunteers working with constrained resources including time. Therefore, a somewhat symbiotic relationship between researchers and rescuers/carers is required. Researchers and AECs may benefit from improved feedback whilst rescuers/carers could potentially be provided with animal health or veterinary information/resources.

In light of the above, below is an example of correspondence that has been issued to a Victorian wildlife group to raise awareness.

### Improving Collaboration Between Wildlife Rescuers and Conservation Researchers

Governments and universities across the world conduct research on wild animals. The purposes of these research projects are varied and range from gaining insights into wildlife diseases, assessing impacts of climate, monitoring threatened species populations, and assessing behaviour.

As wildlife carers and rescuers we may at times deal with animals that are part of a research project. This is often noticed due to an identification or tracking device on an animal.

Examples include:

- Swans - the well-known neck collars around Albert Park Lake (see [myswan.org.au](http://myswan.org.au))
- Birds - leg bands (e.g., Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme), paints, tattoos, flipper bands (penguins), harnesses
- Kangaroos - ear tags, neck collars (e.g., Anglesea)
- Koalas - collars
- Possums - collars
- Mammals - shaved patches, paints
- Reptiles - paints



Koala with ear tag (Joanna Griffin)



Swan with neck collar (Tim White)



Possum caught by night camera (Colin Cook)



Kangaroo with ear tag (Reza Mohammed)

Other unusual observations that may indicate previous human care (possibly not research related):

- Surgical scars (may have been treated for injury previously)
- Humanised behaviour (may have been a pet, often a permit required)
- Potential research items in a natural environment (e.g., Video cameras, trapping devices, signs, research personnel)

In Australia, wildlife research is assessed by an Animal Ethics Committee to ensure the welfare of animals is optimised. Ongoing monitoring of animals under research is required. This is where wildlife carers and rescuers can be helpful. If you find an injured animal, it is a good idea to try to determine if it is part of a research study and if so, who is conducting the research. This may involve a google search (including [scholar.google.com](https://scholar.google.com)), contacting the park rangers, or contacting the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (issuer of research permits) or the equivalent State / Territory Government Department in your region.

The ultimate two key people to find are the researcher and the Animal Welfare Officer/ Veterinarian. Most research activities should have a veterinarian available for contact 24hrs a day. This veterinarian can often provide advice over the phone and report back to the ethics committee if necessary. If you are a wildlife carer who works in an area and you notice research in operation, it may be worthwhile trying to obtain the researcher/ veterinarian contact information just in case you need them in future. Feedback from wildlife carers on illnesses and injuries can enable researchers to withdraw animals from the study and provide extra data to help other animals in future.

There is the potential to improve wildlife research and welfare by increasing the networks between wildlife rescuers / carers and researchers / veterinarians. So reach out and contact someone if there is an opportunity as you will likely learn something and contribute to animal wellbeing.

## ANZCCART AEC

### Member of the Year Award

ANZCCART is calling for nominations for the 2018 AEC Member of the Year Award for a Member who is currently serving on one or more AECs in Australia and New Zealand.

Refer to the appropriate websites for full terms and conditions.

#### Australian nominations close 1 June 2018

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/ANZCCART/awards/>

#### New Zealand nominations close 29 June 2018

<https://anzccart.org.nz/awards/>

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### Recent Articles of Interest

#### Medical Research Often Ignores Differing Health Outcomes for Men and Women

A study in *Nature Human Behaviour* has found that research was most likely to address gender differences when female scientists were first and last authors. The authors examined more than 1.5 million medical-research papers published between 2008 and 2015 and of those papers female researchers only made up 40% of first authors and 27% of last authors.

The study added that last authors usually lead on identifying, planning and developing research, and neglecting these inequalities could affect health outcomes in conditions such as cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis with life-threatening consequences. The authors did note that more medical researchers, journal editors and science agencies already recognise the importance of including gender analysis in research.

The article on the study can be read at:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0235-x>

#### Jump in Animal Research in Canada Generates Debate on Science Ethics

The Canadian Council on Animal Care, reported that in 2016 their member institutions used 21%

more animals in research, teaching and testing compared to the previous year and with a 50% increase over five years ago. Fish, mice and cattle accounted for 84% of the total and both laboratory and field work were included. A Council spokeswoman explained that increases in funding influences the growth of research programs and can increase animal-based testing. There are also variations in funding priorities, regulatory changes, new technologies and scientific interests all of which can impact the numbers in animal use.

Canada has been accused of lagging other countries in exploring alternatives to using animals in research. The Executive-Director of the Canadian Centre for Alternatives to Animal Methods argued that it's difficult to implement change as animal research has been the basis of biomedical research for the last century, and added that they are not ready to end research immediately but do need to start exploring alternatives to reduce animal testing.

The US is already making changes: the National Institute of Health has declared that within a decade the use of animals to test safety issues with environmental chemicals and drugs will be replaced by alternative methods, and another Government agency is shifting from using vertebrate animals in testing chemical substances.

Conversely, the Director of Veterinary Services and Research Support at the University of British Columbia has argued that animal research numbers are decided by the pursuit in finding solutions to human diseases, and animals are needed for basic research to understand the disease before moving to the next step. This research is needed to advance to clinical trials to determine if a drug can be released to the public.

Read more of this debate at:

<http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/jump-in-animal-research-in-canada-generates-debate-on-science-ethics>

#### Science Editorial: Progress on Reproducibility

The Editors at *Science*, over the past year, have withdrawn three papers which they had previously published. These cases showed a lack of compliance with data transparency, a lack of definition with reproducibility and inaccurately presented key data which highlights just some of the concerns associated with current reproducibility guidelines.

The Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) guidelines have been developed to encourage transparency and openness in scientific publications and cover key principles applicable in many science fields. *Science* editors support the underlying principles of these guidelines and have amended their editorial procedures to contain specific statements for each of the categories within the TOP Guidelines.

Improving reproducibility will require the best possible practices and it is hoped guidelines like these will assist in achieving greater transparency and improved research reproducibility.

The full article can be read at:

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/359/6371/9/tab-pdf>

### **The Secrets of Becoming an Effective Trainer**

There is great importance placed on ensuring that research staff are properly trained in all aspects of laboratory animal work; however, ensuring that new trainers are properly trained is not always addressed. This article was written by a veterinary technician with training personnel at the Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education (CARE) and offers a new perspective on techniques for training new trainers.

The article encourages using alternatives to animals when teaching non-surgical procedures and once the trainee has mastered the basic skills, she/he can then move towards performing the procedure on live animals. This method limits stress and injury to the animal, the handler and the trainer. As in the case of conducting research with animals, missing necessary steps will compromise its success and so it is vital in the training process that every step is completed efficiently and competently.

Qualities of an effective trainer and misconceptions of training are also addressed, with discussion on tips for training new trainers and learning to train as well as encouragement and advice for those interested in becoming competent trainers.

The full article can be read at:

[https://www.alnmag.com/article/2018/02/secrets-becoming-effective-trainer?et\\_cid=6275035&et\\_rid=454969632&type=cta&et\\_cid=6275035&et\\_rid=454969632&linkid=https%3a%2f%2fwww.alnmag.com%2farticle%2f2018%2f02%2fsecrets-becoming-effective-trainer%3fet\\_cid%3d6275035%26et\\_rid%3d%26subscriberid%26type%3dcta](https://www.alnmag.com/article/2018/02/secrets-becoming-effective-trainer?et_cid=6275035&et_rid=454969632&type=cta&et_cid=6275035&et_rid=454969632&linkid=https%3a%2f%2fwww.alnmag.com%2farticle%2f2018%2f02%2fsecrets-becoming-effective-trainer%3fet_cid%3d6275035%26et_rid%3d%26subscriberid%26type%3dcta)

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The opinions expressed in *ANZCCART NEWS* are not necessarily those held by ANZCCART.

Contributions to *ANZCCART NEWS* are welcome and should be sent to the Australian Office of ANZCCART.

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