

Annual report for 2024

Introduction

The Swedish 3Rs Center is a competence centre for questions related to replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experimentation. The 3Rs Center is located at the Swedish Board of Agriculture and has the National Committee for the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes as its steering group.

For 2024, the government decided to remove the earmarked funding for the 3Rs Center's operations. Therefore, the Swedish Board of Agriculture has had to reduce the capacity of the 3Rs work. At the end of 2023, the National Committee made clear priorities and planned the Center's operations according to the new prerequisites.

The changes in operations became fully visible internally in May 2024 when the staff who had been given notice had left the Center for other positions within and outside the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Externally, the changes are probably not yet fully visible as the Center during the year has completed many projects that had been started earlier. Therefore, despite the circumstances, 2024 has been a year marked by the publication of new materials. Only in 2025 will the reduced capacity in the 3Rs Center's work become fully visible externally.

Under the current circumstances, the National Committee has decided that the 3Rs Center should not allocate resources to produce a full-scale annual report in the manner that was previously done. Below is therefore a simpler summary of the Committee's and the Center's work during 2024. All published materials are available on the Center's website jordbruksverket.se/3R.

Target groups

In the work plan for 2024, the National Committee decided that the following target groups should be prioritized in the 3Rs Center's work during the year

- Animal Welfare Bodies
- Regional Animal Ethics Committees
- governmental agencies
- research funding bodies.

Completed initiatives

Guidance documents

During the year, the 3Rs Center has published guidance documents and support materials in the following areas

- acclimatisation of mice, rats and zebrafish prior to experiments
- group and single housing of rabbits
- aquarium furnishing for fish housed in a laboratory environment.

The work on all guidance documents had progressed significantly already at the beginning of the year. All documents are available in English, and for several of them there are also summary posters that can be printed and displayed in suitable locations.

Information materials

During the year, the 3Rs Center has expanded the information on the website with two new pages about

- animal-free cell culture
- development and validation of methods.

These compilations of knowledge are only available in English, and the work on them had progressed relatively far already at the beginning of the year.

Other materials

In the beginning of the year, the 3Rs Center published a film portraying a good example of replacement of animal experiments with cell-based models. The research group that developed the cell models is based at Lund University.

During the year, the Center has completed additional materials of various kinds

- a discussion material for working with the Culture of Care in Swedish laboratory animal facilities
- a checklist on the 3Rs for use in reviewing ethical applications
- a strategy for the National Committee's own work on replacement of animal experimentation
- a compilation of the changes that the Animal Welfare Bodies have approved to existing ethical permits
- a Swedish overview of a Canadian guideline document for good animal welfare in research on wild animals.

These materials are only available in Swedish, and the work on several of them had been started before 2024.

The Center has also published a statement on the 3Rs for research funding bodies. By the end of the year, nine organisations had endorsed the statement.

Network meetings

During the year, the 3Rs Center has conducted network meetings for the following target groups

- Animal Welfare Bodies
- animal technicians
- research funding bodies
- Regional Animal Ethics Committees.

During these meetings, participants received information from the Center and had the opportunity to discuss various issues with each other.

The Center has also organized three meetings for discussions between the chairpersons of the Animal Welfare Bodies.

International collaborations

For several years, the Center has been involved in two international collaborations with other 3Rs Centers

- the COST project IMPROVE, in which the Center during 2024 has participated in meetings and collected information about Swedish 3Rs-related educations
- the Togeth3R consortium, where the Center has participated in the planning of a webinar series that will be organised in the beginning of 2025.

The National Committee is also part of a network with other European national committees. A face-to-face meeting was held within this network during the year.

Continuous work

In its continuous work, the Center has

- organised two webinars
- published five issues of the newsletter Focus on the 3Rs
- distributed news to Animal Welfare Bodies, animal technicians, and the replace network
- published news on the website and on LinkedIn
- made minor updates to the website
- communicated with the six Swedish governmental agencies that have a 3Rs strategy

- in a collaboration with the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the Swedish Veterinary Agency, funded the work of an expert in the OECD expert group Thyroid disruption methods
- participated in the work of the National Hub for governmental agencies within the project Partnership for the Assessment of Risk from Chemicals (PARC)
- participated in a meeting and, upon request, compiled information for the PARERE network
- followed the EU Commission's work on developing a roadmap to phase out animal testing within the EU
- planned and organised the National Committee's meetings.

In its continuous work, the Center also participates in and presents its initiatives at national and international seminars. In addition to the meetings mentioned above, the Center has presented its initiatives at the following meetings during 2024

- the seminar BME@LiU at Linköping University
- a national meeting within PARC
- the Swedish Veterinary Association's annual event Veterinärmötet
- the Danish 3R Symposium
- the Swedish Research Council's seminar on current issues in animal experimentation.