



Resource Sheet Number 8 – The Regulators – Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU)

The Home Office stated that the purpose of the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) is to protect animals in science by maintaining compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA). ASRU is a department of the Home Office. As the regulators, it is only them that have the right of access to establishments licenced under ASPA 1986. Neither the RSPCA or even the police can enter or inspect establishments without there being proof of illegal activity.

The office address of ASRU is 14th Floor Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR9 2 BY.
[Animals in Science Regulation Unit About](#)

The email address to send Freedom of Information requests is:
foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk

To report non-compliance to ASRU use:
ASRUEnforcement@homeoffice.gov.uk

To make a complaint, mark FAO Will Reynolds, and email:
AnimalsinSciencePolicy@homeoffice.gov.uk

In April 2022, the Animals in Science Regulation Policy Unit (ASRPU) was established within the Home Office, as a separate entity from the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU). The Policy Unit provides ministers with guidance on matters concerning the regulation of animal use in scientific research, primarily under the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA).

ASRU issue three types of licences:

1. Establishment (PEL) or the place at which the work is carried out. Fee £ 1,007 retrospectively from April 2025.
2. Project Licence (PPL) for the program of work. No fee.
3. Personal Licence (PIL) for each person carrying out procedures on animals. Fee £ 329 from April 2025.

There is no need to hold a project licence for the breeding of non GA (Genetically Altered) animals as this is not a regulated procedure. The facility though must hold an Establishment licence. MBR Acres does have a project licence for The Production of Laboratory Animal Bio-



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Products as this involves experimental or other scientific procedure applied to a protected animal which may cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm.

As of 31st December 2024:

The licensing function of ASRU consisted of 1 full time equivalent (FTE) senior leader, 8.2 FTE inspectors, 2 FTE executive officers and 3 FTE administration officers.

The compliance assurance function of ASRU comprised of 1 FTE senior leader, 4 FTE inspectors, 1 FTE senior executive officer, 1 FTE higher executive officer and 3 FTE executive officers.

The business support function comprised of 2.5 FTE staff, and process and standards function had 2 FTE personnel.

Graphically shown are the total number of inspectorate staff at 31.12.2024 which was 13 and the average FTE throughout the year was 14.36.

As of 31st December 2023:

The licensing function of ASRU consisted of 1 full time equivalent (FTE) senior leader, 11.18 FTE inspectors, 3 FTE executive officers and 2 FTE administration officers.

The compliance assurance function of ASRU comprised of 1 FTE senior leader, 4.6 FTE inspectors, 1 FTE senior executive officer, 1 FTE higher executive officer and 3 FTE executive officers.

The business support function comprised of 1 FTE senior leader and 1.54 FTE executive officers.

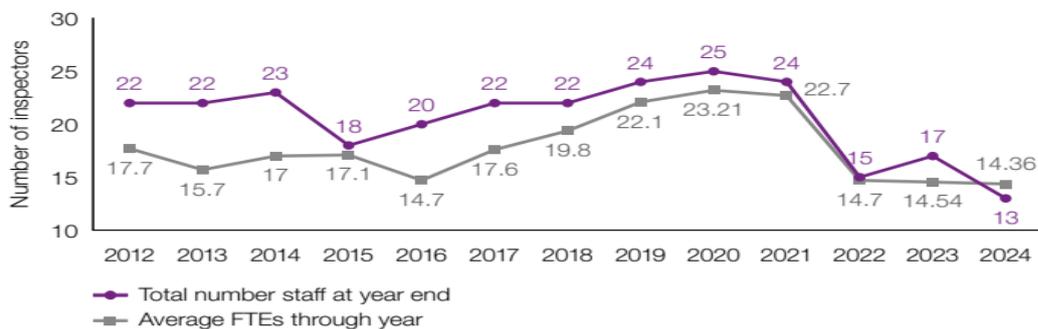
Graphically shown are total number of inspectorate staff at 31.12.2023 which was 17 and the average FTE throughout the year was 14.54.

As for project licences granted per inspector, it was in 2024: 57.70 (2023: 41.14) no wonder project licences are just approved with no consideration of non-animal methods (NAMs).



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Table B2: Inspectorate staff years, ending March 2011 to 2024



Note: FTE = full-time equivalent averaged across the year

Licence applications and amendments, 2024

PIL: Granted 2,164, Amended 738, in force at end of year 13,311

PEL: Granted 2, Amended 3,440, Revoked 3, in force at end of year 134

PPL: Granted 472, Amended 905, in force at end of year 2,315

Again, PEL amendment is very high compared to the number of establishments.

Licence applications and amendments, 2023

PIL: Granted 2336, Amended 740, in force at end of year 11,504

PEL: Granted 1, Amended 4,480, in force at end of year 134

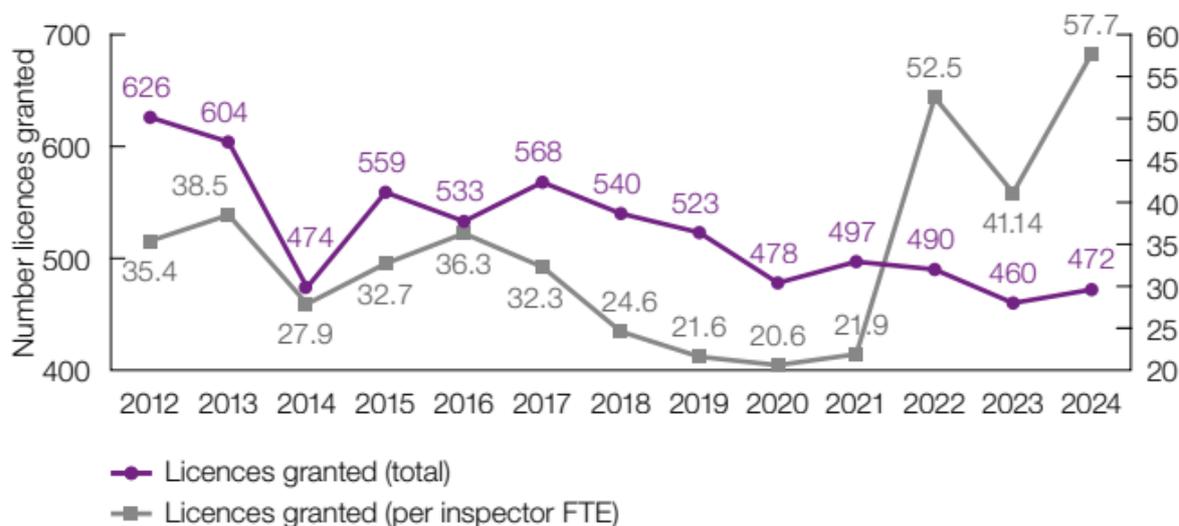
PPL: Granted 460, Amended 945, in force at end of year 1,870

We have queried why 4,480 Establishment Licences have been amended when there were only 134 establishments.



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Table B3: Project licences granted, years ending March 2011 to 2024



Lack of regulatory oversight, combined with the sheer number of animals held in laboratories, means that shocking welfare violations occur. ASRU annual reports for 2019-2021 were not published until 26th October 2022. The annual reports for 2024 and 2023 were published on 12th December 2025 and 17th December 2024. Non-compliance cases showed a significant increase with 2021– 61 and 2024 – 146, despite inspections reducing from 470 in 2019 to 68 in 2024.

Looking at 2024 non-compliance cases were 146, which in 143 cases effected 22,204 animals. Just 68 Establishments were audited in 2024 compared with 214 in 2021. Whilst the audit regime has changed they can still be remote or announced or not even include sight of animals, it is all very much a paper exercise with reliance upon self-reporting of non-compliance. In 2024 just 10 audits were unannounced. There were no full system audits, these are no longer mentioned at all in the report.



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Types of audits under the new change in working regime:

- Full systems audits: evaluating governance systems within an establishment or a project to understand how robust they are at maintaining compliance.
- Facilities audits: to record evidence of the effectiveness of the governance systems in place to maintain compliance with standard conditions of the establishment licence and Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Animals Bred, Supplied or Used for Scientific Purposes, and to decide about any regulatory actions required to reduce the risk of non-compliance.
- Facility assessment for establishment licence amendments: to assess new facilities and/or significant changes to existing facilities that cannot be confirmed remotely.
- For cause audits: for enforcement investigations when the cause of non-compliance cannot be confirmed and for other regulatory purposes such as investigation following a whistle-blowing report received by ASRU.

Each establishment will receive a **full system audit at least every three years if it does not hold special species and at least every calendar year if it holds special species**. MBR Acres has NEVER had a full systems audit. In 2022 there were only 4 full system audits yet there were 30 Establishments with special species. ASRU routinely break their own rules. By way of example, MBR Acres could be audited in January 2024 then not until December 2025 as it is by calendar year.

[Full Systems Audit Process](#) – see Page 4.

For non-compliance, remedial action, in almost all cases, is a letter or inspectors' advice. Non-compliance falls under systems relying on self-reported or whistleblower testimony, leading to a worrying lack of oversight by the regulatory authority. The reality is neither the Home Office Animals in Scientific Regulation Unit (ASRU) or the public know what is happening behind those closed doors. The self-reported non-compliance cases will be just the tip of the iceberg.

Additionally, ASRU is fully funded by those it regulates leading to a conflict of interest and lack of independence. ASRU also have confirmed by Freedom of Information Request that they



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have no intention of levying a fee on project licences so that they can take on more inspectors. A project licence fee with the amount charged per number of animals and severity could also deter animal researchers.

Sadly, the cruel treatment of animals within laboratories continues under the falsehood that the ASRU regulation of ASPA, provides adequate protection for laboratory animals.

In February 2022, Chris Sherwood, CEO of the RSPCA, resigned from the ASRU change programme steering committee, citing lack of confidence in this Regulator.

[Chris Sherwood RSPCA resignation](#)

The regulated community and wider stakeholders also have expressed concerns that there was inadequate consultation in the regulatory reform that was implemented in July 2021. We are now told ASRU are now working on a new regulatory regime.

ASRU Annual Reports

[ASRU Annual Reports](#)

If you have time, please do read these.

Investigations into ASRU data integrity and as to if they are fit for purpose:

1. Statistics

[ONS Findings](#)

This compliance check by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) was instigated following a complaint by a member of the public in August 2022. Over 5000 data errors were identified by someone who had access only to public records and freedom of information requests. The raw data of the publication 'Annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals Great Britain' is not suitably audited, collected, reconciled or recorded by appropriately trained individuals. On the day of publication of the 2021 annual statistics, a number of errors were found in the accompanying data tables. At a later time 5 out of 20 universities either gave wrong data in FOI responses or published incorrect data on their website.

Up to another 2 million laboratory animal deaths are ignored in the annual statistics as they are not used in 'regulated' procedures. If a non-genetically altered animal is bred, found to



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be surplus to requirements or its tissues/organs wanted and is then *humanely* killed then its life/death is not made public. These additional statistics were last published for 2017 and at that time was 1.81 million animals [Additional statistics 2017](#), repeated enquiries just get the same response that publication of additional statistics remains under review.

Establishments were found to not perform stocktakes, audits or data reconciliations. Data collection was chaotic with no guidance issued. Researchers admitted to writing animals killed on a sheet of paper and filed in a drawer, laptops with no back up taken home, establishments using same data as project licence holders. None of the people involved are qualified data controllers or auditors.

The Home Office for the annual statistics rely on a project licence holder to tell them the number, species and birth place. Project Licence holders don't even have to be located at the site animals are kept.

No Government department will take responsibility for data integrity of the import of research animals and there are no reconciliations between departments. The reality is no one knows how many animals are being bought into the UK, where they come from or what was the purpose of movement (this is an optional field to complete).

In 2021, the annual statistics document stated that 'use of dogs in procedures decreased by 3% in the last year but have increased by 24% over the last 10 years.' Again it was left to a member of the public to dispute these percentages and the Home Office admitted that 'Due to a processing error, the 24% increase was incorrect. The correct figures show a 7% decrease in the use of dogs in experimental procedures over the last 10 years.'

2. Non-technical summaries. Members of the public identified over 400 errors out of around 2000 documents – this was the result: [2021 annual report explanatory note](#)

Also, out of 7 cosmetic project licences 3 non-technical summaries were not published until they were pursued at end of 2023. 3 times incorrect information was given just for these 7 documents. We have requested a copy of the report of the independent auditors, but this has been denied, a GRC tribunal hearing is due to take place in early February 2026.

3. Retrospective assessments. An initial investigation indicates that around one third are missing. An ASRU FOI response in July 2022 said: 'We are aware of some gaps in our database and are working to address these. Retrospective assessments are published as part of updated non-technical summaries once a project has expired. We are currently reviewing outstanding non-technical summaries and will publish them updated following retrospective assessments, where appropriate, by the end of 2022.'



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Retrospective Assessments are a legal requirement. We chased an update to this situation in February 2024 after seeing this document: [ASRU operational newsletter February 2024](#) see paragraph 'Overdue submission of retrospective assessments'. The response was 'We are currently reviewing outstanding retrospective assessments and will publish them at the earliest opportunity.' The retrospective assessment we had requested sight of in July 2022 remain unpublished.

We also asked for a copy of MBR Acres licence for 'The Production of Laboratory Animal Bio-Products' for 2018. The response was 'the Retrospective Assessment is due to be carried out by 2 April 2024 and the information requested is not held. Please note that when the document is published it will be located with NTS's for projects granted in 2018 and not 2019. The NTS was incorrectly published in the 2019 volume and will be moved.'

4. The Number of inspectors is insufficient, 1 visit annually if establishment has special species, 1 visit every 3 years if not. Even looking at the department as a whole the 2024 annual report said there were 13 FTE staff at the end of the year. This cannot be adequate for 2.64 million regulated procedures and an additional 1.81 million animals killed in laboratories without regulated procedures (based on last published figure for 2017). Procedures will be slightly higher than actual animals as some are re-used but ignoring that and assuming they are the same we are looking at 4.45 million animals. The compliance assurance team in 2024 is just 1 FTE senior leader, 4 FTE inspectors, 1 FTE senior executive officer, 1 FTE higher executive officer and 3 FTE executive officers. That equates to responsibility for the protection of 445,000 scientific procedures each.

Three GRC first tier tribunals re FOIA 2000 exemptions have already been heard, with a further one with a hearing date in February 2026. Another four complaints are being considered by the ICO. The respondents are the Information Commissioners Officers (ICO) and the Home Office. The exemptions used under the FOIA 2000 that have been appealed are:

S38 Health and Safety – this is for the names of Licenced Establishments that are public bodies. WON

S36 prejudice to the conduct of public affairs exemption – for the release of MBR Inspection reports for 2022 and 2023. WON

S44 disclosure is prohibited by other legislation specifically in this case to s24 ASPA 1986 (the secrecy clause) – re copies of project licences for safety and toxicity testing using dogs. LOST



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5. Non animal methods not considered at all throughout the project licence application process. ASPA 1986 says ‘the principle of replacement is the principle that, wherever possible, a **scientifically satisfactory** method or testing strategy not entailing the use of protected animals must be used instead of a regulated procedure.’ Further, the Government repeatedly states that animals are only used as a last resort principle and that their use is only permitted where no alternative exists. In practice a ‘scientifically satisfactory’ method is interpreted as one that has undergone regulatory approval and validation, thus creating an additional layer of compliance that is not explicitly required by the legislation. UK Law is routinely overridden by a global Regulator expectation (the FDA Modernization Act 2.0 should remove this). Even if Inspectors are consulted, most, if not all, come from an animal research background and thus are biased from the outset. Inevitably animal procedures will be approved where non-animal methods do exist. Since 2011 just 3 PPL applications have been rejected, data is not held prior to 2011.
6. In October 2023 finally the Government agreed animal use not mandated in UK Law.
[MP written question](#)
The Government response to our 2023 toxicity petition stated: ‘In the UK it is required by law that all new drugs are tested within two species’. This was never updated with a correction despite in October the response being ‘There is no United Kingdom legislation that mandates animal testing.’ The source for this conflicting information will have in both cases been the Home Office, likely consulting with ASRU. If a department does not know UK law, should it be regulating it?
7. S24 ASPA 1986 – the results of a consultation in June 14 remain unpublished. Please see separate resource sheet.
8. The code of practice for animal care and housing gives little to no protection for laboratory animals. [Code of Practice COP](#)
For instance, stating only that care staff should be relevant to species allows MBR acres to have 4-6 staff go in at a weekend for 4 hours for 1200 - 1500 dogs, for 20 hours there are no care staff on site, only security who do not enter the sheds.
9. The Rawle Report was commissioned by the National Centre of 3Rs (NC3Rs) [Rawle Report](#)
This organisation is Government funded and included as being interviewed for it was Will Reynolds of ASRU.