



Media Release

For immediate release
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Local MP joins animal campaigners in call for changes to current Freedom of Information Act

Local MP, Mike Hancock, has introduced an Early Day Motion (EDM) to Parliament calling for a key change in legislation which will allow greater transparency and accountability concerning animal testing in the UK.

The Portsmouth South MP has joined forces with the **BUAV**, the UK's leading organisation campaigning to end animal experiments.

In a recent case brought by the BUAV under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Court of Appeal ruled that it was completely up to animal researchers what information could be disclosed to the public, even to Parliament. The information does not even need to be confidential. The BUAV's 'Freedom of Information' campaign focuses on this exemption, which currently prevents the Home Office from giving out information on licences issued for animal experiments.

The BUAV believes that informed public debate is essential but that it cannot happen without meaningful information being available. Under the current system such information is being denied to the public. Effective scrutiny – parliamentary, public and, ultimately, judicial – of the way the Home Office regulates the experiments is impossible under this secretive system. Importantly, there would be no risk to safety from greater transparency because information which could reveal the identity of researchers or establishments, where their involvement with animal experiments was not already in the public domain, would be withheld. Similarly, genuinely confidential information would also be withheld.

Chief Executive of the BUAV, Michelle Thew, said: "The research industry always talks of honest and open debate and now we're asking them to put this ethos into practice. We are grateful to Mike Hancock for his support on this important campaign. He understands how important it is for the public to have the right to know what is being done to animals in the secret world of animal testing."

Mike Hancock said: "There is obviously some information as in other areas that should be kept confidential. But I don't see why the public should not be able to put in requests under Freedom of Information as in other areas of Government work."

It was revealed that there were 3.7 million animal experiments last year. This is a vast number but we only have the scantiest knowledge of what is happening in these experiments. We need more light shone on what is actually going on and people having the right to make requests under FOI would be a step forward in that regard."

All MPs are invited to show their support for this issue by going here and signing their name to the EDM.

ENDS

For more information please contact Erin Seymour, marketing and communications officer, 020 7619 6978 or email erin.seymour@buav.org. For more information in the campaign please visit www.buav.org.

Notes

EDM 1908 was introduced on Thursday, 16 July 2009. The full text can be read at <http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=39133&SESSION=899>
The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) set out the ways the public can get access to information held by the Government. This includes information held by the Home Office, Universities and other bodies about animal experimentation.