

The Use of Animals and Animal Products in Research



1. Scope

The policy is intended for external use by applicants for, and recipients of, Humane Research Trust funding.

The policy is also intended for internal use by officers of The Humane Research Trust.

2. Policy Purpose

The policy is needed to ensure all grant applicants and their teams fully understand the circumstances of their grant in relation to the use of animals and animal products. The policy also allows officers of the Trust to act consistently in the administration of the Trust's funds.

This policy defines the current application of all consumables, reagents, materials, and models in the discharge of a project funded to any degree by The Humane Research Trust.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 The Humane Research Trust is against any use of animals and animal-derived products for medical and scientific research.
- 3.2 The Trust supports scientists to develop and apply techniques to replace the use of animals and animal-derived products in human-relevant research.
- 3.3 The Trust does not allow animal-derived products to be purchased through its grants or to be used in any research it funds. This includes stock products purchased using other funds. See section 5 for more information.
- 3.4 Results from research using animals or animal-derived products conducted contemporaneously e.g. by co-investigators or collaborators or to serve as a positive control, cannot be used to inform THRT-funded research. Historic data can be referenced.
- 3.5 The Trust supports the use of human volunteers and donated human tissues and cells, including human embryonic stem cells and foetal tissue, provided consent has been given by the donor.

4. Definition of an animal and animal product

Animals and animal products: all, and any, animals, animal tissues, or products derived in any way from animals. This includes all animal exudates, animal-derived antibodies, substrates, reagents, and other biomaterials. It also includes waste tissue from the meat industry.

The Trust defines animals as including all organisms of the Kingdom Animalia (excluding humans), not only the animals that are protected under the Animals in Scientific Procedures Act 1986. This definition includes insects.

5. Animal-derived products

5.1 Cell culture materials

Whilst human tissue models have replaced the use of live animals in many medical research experiments, animal-derived products such as foetal calf serum and Matrigel are commonly used in the models to support cell growth and differentiation. Around 2 million cow foetuses are killed each year to meet the worldwide demand for foetal calf serum. Many thousands of mice each year are used in the extraction of Matrigel.

The Humane Research Trust will not fund the purchase of any animal-derived cell culture materials and these products must not be used in Humane Research Trust-funded projects. Some products, for example knockout serum replacements, may be labelled serum-free but this does not mean they are xeno-free.

The Humane Research Trust actively supports projects to replace animal-derived products in human tissue models. THRT will fund the use of cell culture serums and scaffolds derived from non-animal sources, e.g. iMatrix-511, Panexin, and peptide hydrogels. The use of animal-derived products to provide a positive control is not allowed – researchers must use historic data.

5.2 Antibodies

Antibodies are routinely used in medical and scientific research. It is estimated that in the EU, about one million animals per year are used for antibody discovery and production. The Humane Research Trust actively supports the use of antibodies derived from non-animal sources e.g. phage-display or plant-derived. The Trust will fund the bespoke development of such non-animal derived antibodies. The Trust will also fund the use of recombinant monoclonal antibodies where no alternative can be sourced. Researchers must provide the Trust with full details of the

recombinant antibody they wish to use, including the year in which the original sequence was harvested from the animal. The original DNA sequence of the recombinant monoclonal antibody must have been obtained from the host animal no later than 2020.

5.3 ELISAs and other assays

Some ELISA kits contain foetal bovine or foetal calf serum in their buffers. Researchers must use their best efforts to identify kits that are xeno-free. Where such kits are unavailable researchers must notify the Trust.

Revision History	Changes made	Policy Review Date
Version 1: January 2023		
Version 2: November 2023	Name/logo updated Section 7 updated	November 2026
Version 3: September 2024	Sections 1 and 2 removed Section 4 definition of an animal updated Section 5.1 updated to reference knockout replacement serums Section 5.2 updated with the cutoff date for animal-derived monoclonal antibodies Section 5.3 added	