26 September 2019

Lisa Dymond

By email: fyi-request-11085-32c463e4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Lisa

Official information request for information related to the forced swim test and animal vivisection

I refer to your requests for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) dated 1 August 2019.

Each of your requests, and the University's response, is set out below.

> *"How many animals are tested per year on (sic) the swim test?"*

The University has not performed the forced swim test this year, therefore no animals have been subjected to this test in 2019.

> *"How many animals survive this test?"*

All animals used in the forced swim test survive.

> *"What happens to the animals following from your testings - both living and deceased?"*

The rats remain in the laboratory. As stated above, all animals survive the forced swim test.

> *"What is the process followed for deceased animals?"*

There are no deceased animals from the forced swim test, therefore no process to follow.

> *"What new insight is gained by repeating the Forced swim test?"*

The forced swim test measures the rats coping strategy to acute stress and provides an insight into the neural limb of the stress response. Previous research at the University utilising the test aimed to identify side effects on the stress response when studying novel pharmaceutical treatments. The forced swim test has a specialised utility and limitations that make it only applicable in specific situations, such as where there is suspicion that a compound is acting on the parts of the brain involved in the stress response.

> *"How many VUW students refuse to perform the swim test?"*

No students at the University have ever refused to perform the forced swim test.

"How much does it cost to perform the test per semester?"

Due to the substantial amount of work that would be required to research and collate the information you have requested, we are refusing your request under section 18(f) of the Act. There are a large number of factors the University would need to consider in order to calculate the cost of this test. These include:

- The time of the researchers and/or student. We would need to figure out exactly who has performed each test and then calculate their hourly rates during the reporting period;
- Equipment used in the test. This includes one-off purchases of cameras and equipment necessary to run the test;
- Costs of maintaining the animals. This is dependent on the age of the animals at the time they go through the test. The University would need to retrospectively go back through lab-books and collate the age of the animals.

There is no single record detailing this information, therefore this would need to be collated from scratch. The University considered whether a charge and/or extension would be adequate to mitigate the impact of this request, allowing us to answer your questions as required by section 18A of the Act. However, we believe this work would still have a significant and unreasonable impact on the University's ability to carry out its other operations.

"Specifically what other animals are tested on at VUW for?"

In 2018, the following animals were used in tests at the University:

- Mice
- Rats
- Birds
- Possums
- Reptiles
- Fish

Rats are the only animals used in the forced swim test.

"Which departments allow the testing?"

All procedures involving animals are approved at an institutional level by an Animal Ethics Committee operating under an MPI approved and gazetted Code of Ethical Conduct. As such, no single department 'allows' the testing. Research involving animals is only approved where there is no practicable non-animal alternative available and any harm which is done to the animal can be justified by the potential benefits that the research will bring. All decisions to allow animal research at the University are approved by consensus by a committee which includes Animal Welfare organisation representatives, Veterinarians, Science Advisors, and a layperson.

"Does the Ethics committee hold regular reviews to incorporate public perception of vivisection?"

The AEC is regularly updated on advancements in the reduction, refinement and replacement of animals in research and testing, either through regular newsletters (Understanding Animal Research, NC3Rs, etc.), submissions to the AEC, and attendance at conferences including the following in 2017-2019:

- ANZCCART 2017: "Maintaining social license in a changing world"

- ANZCCART 2018: "Keeping it relevant"
- ANZLAA 2018
- ANZLAA 2019
- MPI Animal Sentience Workshop 2017
- NAEAC workshop for AEC members 2018
- NZVA conference workshop 2018

The AEC take this information in to account when reviewing applications. In 2019 the AEC specifically considered submissions made by the NZAVS and PETA regarding the forced swim test.

"How much does it cost to perform each forced swim test?"

Again, due to the substantial amount of work that would be required to research and collate the information you have requested, we are refusing your request under section 18(f) of the Act. The University would need to consider the same factors relevant to your previous question, and as stated above, we believe this work would amount to substantial collation. The University considered whether a charge and/or extension would be adequate to mitigate the impact of this request, allowing us to answer your questions as required by section 18A of the Act. However, we again believe this work would still have a significant and unreasonable impact on the University's ability to carry out its other operations.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact me at oiarequests@vuw.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely

Georgia Tawharu
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