

15 September 2020

Tara Jackson
New Zealand Anti-vivisection Society Inc
PO Box 9387
Tower Junction
Christchurch 8149

By email: tara@nzavs.org.nz

Tēnā koe Tara Jackson

Official Information request

I write in response to your official information request of 9 September 2020 for the approved Animal Ethics Committee application for the use of "other species" in high impact studies in 2018.

We can confirm that 24 stoats were used in one high impact study published in 2018 entitled "Testing the effectiveness of a long-life PAPP bait for stoat control".

Lincoln University is withholding the Animal Ethics application regarding this study under section 6(d) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the University considers that making the information available would be likely to endanger the safety of individuals, given the use of similar information in the past. This is not intended as a reflection on your Society's activities. Under section 6(d), the University is not required to consider whether the interest in withholding is outweighed by countervailing public interest considerations.

The information is also withheld under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Official Information Act 1982, protecting University employees and researchers from improper pressure or harassment. Lincoln University is of a size that public release of such material will more easily lead to the identification of staff, if they had not already been specifically identified in the applications. Given past experience, this identification would open staff up to improper pressure and harassment from certain members of the public. Improper pressure and harassment would affect the way staff perform their duties and would therefore have a detrimental effect on the conduct of public affairs by the University. This would also lead to difficulties in recruiting suitable staff to monitor the compliance of projects in respect to animal welfare. Lincoln University has an obligation to prevent staff in any situation receiving improper pressure or harassment.

We also withhold the information under section 9(2)(ba) of the Official Information Act. As stated above, making animal ethics applications public would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information. It is in the public interest for Animal Ethics Committees to robustly apply the Animal Welfare Act and be enabled to make decisions based on a sound understanding of a situation. Applicants should feel comfortable in providing any and all information required to provide an Animal Ethics Committee an accurate decision making basis. Such information would inevitably include information that would affront some individuals. If an applicant felt that the potential disclosure of information to the public could open them up to harassment, they may be hesitant in providing such information to an Animal Ethics Committee. This would impair a Committee's decision-making ability and ability to ensure the Animal Welfare Act is enforced.

In the University's view, the public interest is served by the annual notification of the numbers of animals used in research, testing and teaching through the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee Annual Report. The University ensures that any research, testing or teaching involving live animals complies fully with the requirements of Part 6 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and is approved by an Animal Ethics Committee.

If you wish to discuss this decision, please contact the undersigned.

Please note that you are entitled under section 28 of the Official Information Act 1982, to have this response reviewed by the Office of the Ombudsman.

Nāku noa, nā



Amy Cradock
Director, Governance and Legal

T: 03 421 5454

E: ويا@lincoln.ac.nz