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Position Paper: Communicating with the public about animal research

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The scientific community needs to promote communication with the public about the use of animals in research at three main levels:

- At the level of the individual scientist
- At the level of the research institute, and
- At the national level

Individual scientists who want to take part in this communication need to be encouraged and supported with appropriate training in communications, specific to the audience (eg journalists, school students, etc).

Research institutions should play an important role in this communication with greater transparency on the subject, by:

- a) Putting a statement about their animal research on their web site
- b) Teaching communication skills to their scientists
- c) Inviting groups, such as school student, teachers, journalists or politicians, to visit their laboratories and animal facilities and to talk to the researchers and animal care staff
- d) To promote internal communications about animal research to their non-scientific staff
- e) Publicly supporting the research of their scientists.

At a national level, there is a need for organizations specialized in public communication about animal research. These organisations should:

- a) Take a pro-active role in providing public information on the issue
- b) Provide professional communication expertise
- c) Be a central point of contact for the media, decision makers and the public about the issue
- d) Support individual scientists and research institutes with training, communication resources and advice.

For maximum credibility, such organisation should be broadly funded by a group of national scientific associations and should employ professional communication staff.