



Animal Research Tomorrow expresses its concern about the recent popular initiatives that pose existential threats to Life Science (research) in Switzerland

Animal rights group activities aiming to massively restrict animal research in Switzerland have been increasing over the past few years. This worrying trend is of major concern for the Life Sciences as it endangers research and hampers medical progress, ultimately endangering the lives of both human and animal patients. Two initiatives that face the popular vote on February 13th, 2022, are seeking to ban animal research:

1. A federal popular vote seeks to ban animal and human studies. If accepted, this would mean that animal research and clinical studies for developing new medication and the import of all drugs and therapies based on animal research and clinical studies will be banned. This would de facto halt medical progress in Switzerland as for the foreseeable future only medication whose efficacy and safety has been vigorously tested in animals and human clinical trials can be approved for market release.
2. In Basel, a cantonal initiative seeks to confer fundamental rights to all primates. If accepted, this initiative would not only have immense ethical and philosophical consequences but also be detrimental to animal welfare of primates. Furthermore, as evolutionary less advanced primates like mouse lemurs are similar to mice with respect to physiological and anatomical parameter, the logic would open the door to initiatives demanding fundamental rights for primates and other animal species in both Switzerland and other European Countries.

Studies in animals pose an ethical challenge for research scientists, politicians, and society. Despite animal rights groups claiming the opposite, animals research remains indispensable for now and into the distant foreseeable future. Our primary objective as researchers is working towards One Health. Thanks to many decades of research, a great number of diseases can be treated today, not only in humans but also in livestock and pets entrusted to us, and such studies are also relevant to animal conservation efforts. Despite a long list of successful research that resulted in new therapies and medications and saved millions of lives, more intensive studies are needed to defeat a wealth of complex and incurable diseases. This research requires animal models to study diseases, whose complexity surpasses all research in available cellular systems. Banning basic and translational research in animals and clinical studies in humans would halt medical progress and deny millions of patients the hope for better treatments now and in the future.

Basel, 8th of February 2022