

3 R Swiss 3R
C C Competence
Centre

INSTITUTIONS
CONDUCTING OR
SUPPORTING
ANIMAL RESEARCH IN
SWITZERLAND

SWISS CULTURE OF CARE CHARTER

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

While an institution's **strategy** outlines its goals and the plans to achieve them, the **culture** defines some of its values and beliefs and provides guidance on ethics, norms and principles employees should abide by and foster an organisation's capacity to thrive. Cultural norms define what is encouraged, discouraged, accepted, or rejected within a group. Culture can evolve flexibly and autonomously in response to changing opportunities and demands.

Culture of Care in laboratory animal science is the commitment of an organisation to improve animal welfare, the application of the 3Rs and scientific quality by implementing a caring and respectful attitude towards the animals bred or used for scientific procedures, its staff and promoting transparency and visibility about its research activities. The establishment of a Culture of Care program within the organisation signifies the responsibility to be proactive and strive to go beyond the legal requirements and obligations and provides all stakeholders with a feeling of pride, that they are doing their job in the right way and that they are doing something good.

The Culture of Care program complements the institutions' compliance with animal welfare regulations and guidelines (TschG Art 3.b.) ¹and ensures the application of the 3Rs principles, as well as the protecting all aspects of both welfare and dignity of animals under human care as much as the experimental purposes allow.

The European Directive 2010/63/EU "Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes" ²mentions the importance for research institutions to establish a culture of care to ensure high-quality animal care, promote animal welfare and improve scientific outcomes. The directive stresses that meeting the requirements of the legislation is often not sufficient to ensure appropriate animal welfare, care and use.



HOW TO IMPLEMENT A CULTURE OF CARE PROGRAMME

The Culture of Care should permeate throughout all levels of an institution, and it is essential that senior staff take the lead and set an example. They should visibly demonstrate their commitment to, and support for, the implementation of good Culture of Care practices going beyond the minimal legal requirements at all levels of the Institution. The management should acknowledge and appreciate efforts of staff to promote an effective Culture of Care, for example as part of staff appraisal criteria or by developing award programs.

Expectations of the establishment with regard to welfare and care practices should be communicated to all personnel, not just those directly involved with animal care and use.

Organisations should further emphasise and expand Culture of Care in their training programs for all those using and caring for animals. At the same time, senior staff should always strive to reinforce the Culture of Care values with animal caretakers, veterinarians, researchers and animal technicians within their teams. Educational events can help share good practice examples.

The organisations should encourage the development of formal and informal communication channels between researchers, animal caretakers, veterinarians and animal technicians. This allows all members to communicate openly and transparently and helps reinforce the values defined above among colleagues, animal welfare officers, supervisors and researchers.

THE CHARTER

The Charter is meant to give practical suggestions on steps and actions to implement the Culture of Care actively in the daily research activities. It is an engagement to bind to a philosophy, which in the present case is rooted in the 3Rs principle. Joining the Culture of Care Charter is an official recognition that a given Institution will do its best to apply 3Rs principles beyond the legal requirements.

The degree with which the Institutions wish to apply the concepts from the Charter will depend on how much resources are allocated to this endeavor, however there is no minimal commitment required.

If each of the key players – animal caretakers, veterinarians, facility managers, scientists, animal welfare officers, leaders – implement one of these actions daily, research institutions would positively impact the welfare of the animals, their research but also the satisfaction of their employees and the trust of the public.

CULTURE OF CARE

“CARING, ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPECT, EXCELLENCE” CHARTER

CARING

- We care about the health, physical and emotional wellbeing of animals and staff.
- We handle animals with care.
- We actively seek to refine the way we house, handle and care for animals.
- We practice and promote safety at the workplace.
- We take care of the equipment and value the resources we work with.
- We acknowledge good work and commitment.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- We are responsible for the welfare of our animals and our team.
- We are accountable for our actions.
- We have agreed ethical values and demonstrate integrity.
- We are committed to open communication within our organisation.
- We contribute to an open dialogue about animal welfare and animal research.

RESPECT

- We act and communicate in a respectful, clear and transparent manner.
- We treat animals and people within and beyond our institution with respect.
- We listen to team members, ask team members how they are and show our appreciation.
- We show and promote respect for the dignity of the animals we work with.
- We treat errors as learning opportunities at their first occurrence.

EXCELLENCE

- We provide high-quality care to the animals and implement animal welfare concepts.
- We strive to promote the application of 3Rs.
- We proactively seek ways to go beyond regulatory requirements.
- We strive for excellence in science.
- We endorse planning and reporting guidelines (PREPARE & ARRIVE 2.0).
- We help to promote a culture of learning.

THE LEADERSHIPS OF THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS COMMIT TO THIS CULTURE OF CARE CHARTER:

- University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW)
- University of Basel (UniBas)
- University of Bern (UniBe)
- University of Lausanne (Unil)

CONTACT US

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