Statistics of animal use in research and teaching, Victoria

1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023  
  
Report No. 41

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Table of Contents

Part 1: Guide to reading the report 1

1.1 The use of animals in research and teaching 1

1.1.1 Why are animals still used for experiments? 1

1.1.2 What protections are in place? 1

1.1.3 Who is on an Animal Ethics Committee? 1

1.2 Reporting process 1

1.2.1 How is the data collected? 1

1.2.2 Why is this data collected? 2

1.2.3 What types of animals are counted? 2

1.2.4 Where are animals sourced from? 2

1.2.5 What is meant by the project purpose? 2

1.2.6 What is meant by the project benefit? 3

1.2.7 What is meant by the impact of activities? 3

1.2.8 What is meant by the number of deaths? 3

1.3 Understanding the 2023 statistics 3

1.3.1 How does the number of animals used compare to previous years? 3

1.3.2 Why are 42,929,498 embryonated eggs reported in 2023? 4

Part 2: Number of animals reported as used in 2023 5

2.1 Reported by animal type 5

2.2 Reported by project benefit 14

2.3 Number of animals used and animal deaths 19

Part 3: Animal use statistics from 2014 to 2023 21

3.1 Number of animals used in research, teaching and testing from 2014 – 2023 21

3.2 Number of specified animals used from 2014 – 2023 23

3.3 Number of animals used in breeding colonies from 2014 – 2023 25

3.4 Number of embryonated avian eggs used in research, teaching and testing from 2018 – 2023 27

Appendices 28

Appendix 1 28

List of tables

[Table 2.1 Number of animals reported as used by animal type 5](#_Toc179542697)

[Table 2.2 Number of animals reported as used by animal type and project purpose 7](#_Toc179542698)

[Table 2.3 Number of non-specified animals used by animal type by source 10](#_Toc179542699)

[Table 2.4 Number of specified animals used by animal type by source 13](#_Toc179542700)

[Table 2.5 Number of animals reported as used by animal type, by project benefits 14](#_Toc179542701)

[Table 2.6 Number of animals used, by project impact by project benefit 17](#_Toc179542702)

[Table 2.7 Number of animals reported as used by project purpose 18](#_Toc179542703)

[Table 2.8 Number of animals used and deaths by type 19](#_Toc179542704)

[Table 3.1 Number of non-genetically modified specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2014 - 2023 25](#_Toc179542705)

[Table 3.2 Number of genetically modified specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2014 – 2023 25](#_Toc179542706)

[Table 3.3 Number of non-genetically modified non-specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2020 - 2023 26](#_Toc179542707)

[Table 3.4 Number of genetically modified non-specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2020 - 2023 26](#_Toc179542708)

[Table 4.1 Reporting categories 28](#_Toc179542709)

List of figures

[Figure 3.1 Number of animals used, 2014 - 2023 21](#_Toc179542519)

[Figure 3.2 Percentage of animals used by project purpose, 2019 – 2023 22](#_Toc179542520)

[Figure 3.3 Percentage of animals used by impact type, 2019 – 2023 22](#_Toc179542521)

[Figure 3.4 Number of specified mice used, 2014 – 2023 23](#_Toc179542522)

[Figure 3.5 Number of specified animals, excluding mice and non-human primates 2014-2023 23](#_Toc179542523)

[Figure 3.6 Number of non-human primates, 2014 – 2023 24](#_Toc179542524)

[Figure 3.7 Number of specified mice in breeding colonies, 2014 – 2023 24](#_Toc179542525)

[Figure 3.8 Number of embryonated avian eggs used, 2018 – 2023 27](#_Toc179542526)

Executive Summary

In Victoria, the use of animals for scientific research, teaching and testing is regulated by the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (the Act). Organisations or individuals that conduct scientific procedures with animals must hold an authorising licence issued by Animal Welfare Victoria.

The Act also requires that the breeding of specified animals (guinea pigs, rats, mice, rabbits, and non-human primates) to be used in scientific procedures is authorised by a Specified Animals Breeding Licence. Licences are subject to conditions prescribed by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019.

Each year, licence holders are required to submit data on their use of animals. This report details the number and species of animals reported by licence holders for the period 1 January to 31 December 2023.

In this period, 2,063,816 animals were used under licence for scientific research, teaching and testing. This is a 59% decrease in animal use in 2023 compared to 2022, and 0.84% below the 10-year average of 2,081,246 animals. This decrease is primarily due to a single project concluding in 2022 that used approximately 3.65 million poultry sourced from a commercial supplier. The number of animals reported fluctuates each year due to variables such as changes to the focus of funded projects, technological advances, and economic factors.

A total of 42,929,498 embryonated eggs were reported in 2023. This is a 31% decrease in embryonated egg use in 2023 compared to 2022. These embryonated eggs are reported distinct from other animal use given the scale, and, as the category was first reported in 2018, to prevent the skewing of historical data. The embryonated eggs were primarily used for vaccine production.

In 2023, around 56% of the non-specified animals reported as used for scientific purposes were used in their natural habitat, 34% were sourced from a commercial supplier, and 5% from own derivation. For specified animals, 63% were bred by the licence holders for their own supply, 21% were sourced from interstate institutions authorised to distribute specified animals and 14% were sourced from Victorian Specified Animal Breeding Licenced suppliers.

The most common impact on animals during research, teaching and testing was observational study involving minor interference (61%), followed by minor conscious intervention (16%) and minor physiological challenge (10%). Less than 1% of animals experienced death as an end point.

Following their use in research, teaching and testing, 26% of animals were humanely euthanised.

Introduction

Animals are used for research and discovery in many fields of science. The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (the Act) regulates their use in Victoria.

The use of animals for scientific research, teaching and testing is termed ‘scientific procedures’ by the Act and must only be conducted under a licence. Laboratory mice, rats, guinea pigs, rabbits and non-human primates are classed in the legislation as ‘specified animals’ and their commercial production and supply requires a separate licence (specified animal breeding licence).

Animal Welfare Victoria licenses and monitors the scientific use of animals in Victoria. It safeguards the well-being of animals by assessing applications for licences to ensure they meet legislative requirements; monitoring compliance; providing advice on best practice procedures, housing and care; and providing training for Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) members. The Act requires animal use to be conducted under a licence and overseen by an AEC.

The AEC is responsible for determining whether animal use is ethically justified and for ensuring that there are no available alternatives, prior to that use commencing. They weigh the predicted scientific or educational value of the projects against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals.

Each year, licence holders are required to submit data on their use of animals.

This report details the number and species of animals reported by licence holders for 2023. Research and teaching organisations report the number of animals they used for scientific procedures as well as any animals held in breeding colonies for in-house supply. Commercial producers of specified animals for the supply of research report the number of breeders and the number of stock animals produced.

This report includes information on where animals were sourced, the purpose and benefit of their use, the impact it had on their well-being, and whether they were killed at the conclusion of the project or not.

# Part 1: Guide to reading the report

## The use of animals in research and teaching

### Why are animals still used for experiments?

Over time, many animal experiments have been replaced by valid alternative methods. The process of validation is complex and rigorous, to ensure reproducibility and accuracy. Unfortunately, not all research methods can be replaced at this time, but it is an ongoing endeavour. More information about replacement, reduction and refinement can be found at [www.nc3rs.org.uk](http://www.nc3rs.org.uk).

### What protections are in place?

Researchers and teachers must apply to an AEC for every project they conduct using animals. Before giving their approval, the AEC must be convinced that the animal use is justified. They weigh the predicted scientific or educational value of the projects against the potential effects on the welfare of the animals.

Applicants must demonstrate to the AEC that their project fulfils the principles of the 3 R's (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement):

1. Replacement: methods that either partially or completely replace the use of animals must be sought. The use of animals is prohibited if a valid, non-animal alternative exists.
2. Reduction: animal numbers must be statistically calculated to be the minimum necessary to achieve the results, and not so low as to render the exercise invalid.
3. Refinement: every effort must be made to minimise the impact on the animals involved, e.g. applying technology that allows an earlier conclusion to the study; ensuring best-practice anaesthesia and analgesia; by providing care and husbandry that meets the animal’s psychological and physical needs.

AECs have a legal obligation to refuse to approve any project they consider unjustified or lacking scientific merit.

### Who is on an Animal Ethics Committee?

There are 4 categories of membership on an AEC. At least one member of each category must be present to make a decision about a new project. The categories are:

Category A Veterinarian.

Category B Researcher or teacher with substantial and recent experience in the use of animals for scientific purposes relevant to the business of the AEC.

Category C Person with demonstrable commitment to, and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not currently involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

Category D Person not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution and who has never been involved in the use of animals in scientific or teaching activities, bringing a completely independent view to the AEC, and must not fit the requirements of any other category.

## Reporting process

### How is the data collected?

Organisations and individuals licensed to use animals for research and teaching are responsible for providing the data to Animal Welfare Victoria by 31 March every year, for the previous calendar year.

### Why is this data collected?

The reporting process collates data in the same areas that are the major considerations for the AEC when assessing an application. The broad outcomes of project purposes must be achieved by the more specific project benefits outlined in the application. The potential benefits are compared with the likely welfare impacts in a cost benefit analysis. Each member of the AEC must decide, according to their own judgement, if the project is justified in an ethical sense. This information informs policy decisions and is used to direct risk-based inspections and educational programs.

### What types of animals are counted?

The types of animals counted in the statistics for research, teaching or testing projects are:

* Mammals at and above the mid-point of gestation. This means that if research or teaching projects use a pregnant animal at or past the halfway point of gestation, she and all in utero offspring must be included in the statistics.
* Birds and reptiles at and above the mid-point of incubation or gestation. This means eggs that are used for research or teaching must be reported in the statistics, if they are at or past the halfway point of incubation. For live bearing reptiles, the same rule applies as for mammals.
* Fish and amphibians capable of independent feeding.
* Adult decapod crustaceans and cephalopods.

Reporting of breeding groups kept by scientific procedures and specified animal breeding licence holders is slightly different. The number of animals used as breeders and the number of stock animals produced must be reported.

### Where are animals sourced from?

Specified animals must only be sourced from:

* Victorian suppliers holding a specified animals breeding licence
* an in-house breeding colony kept by a scientific procedures licence holder, or
* an interstate or overseas supplier who meets all relevant requirements of their local jurisdiction for the breeding of these animals.

Other animals may be sourced from:

* an in-house breeding colony kept by a scientific procedures licence holder
* a commercial supplier
* private donation – this may include animals that continue to stay in the custody of the owners for the duration of the project (except farm animals)
* farms, where the animals do not leave the property
* their natural habitat – these animals may be sampled in the field and immediately released, or brought into captivity
* a captive colony or zoo
* a council pound – these animals must be treated in accordance with the Victorian code of practice for the use of animals from municipal pounds in scientific procedures, or
* another source, not specified above.

### What is meant by the project purpose?

Animals must only be used when there is no other alternative and only for a limited number of reasons. These are:

* to obtain and establish significant information relevant to the understanding of humans and/or animals, or
* to maintain and improve human and/or animal health and welfare, or
* to improve animal management or production, or
* to obtain and establish significant information relevant to the understanding, maintenance or improvement of the natural environment, or
* to achieve educational outcomes in science, as specified in the relevant curriculum or competency requirements.

### What is meant by the project benefit?

These categories refine and add definition to the broader project outcomes reported above. The reporting categories include:

* fundamental biology/physiology
* diseases - human
* diseases - animal
* diseases - zoonotic
* environmental monitoring/ecology
* domestic animal management/production
* wildlife management/conservation
* vertebrate pest management
* production of biological products
* development of techniques
* education
* training (student use of animals)
* regulatory product testing.

### What is meant by the impact of activities?

These reporting categories represent the highest level of impact experienced by the animal during its involvement in research, teaching or testing. An AEC must consider the well-being of animals used for scientific purposes in terms of the cumulative effects of an animal’s lifetime experience. The categories are defined in Appendix 1.

### What is meant by the number of deaths?

The fate of the animals at the conclusion of a project depends on the aims of the project. Some projects require analysis of the animal’s tissues to conclude the experiment, and they are humanely killed to obtain these results. Occasionally, an unexpected adverse event, for example an unexpected reaction, surgical complication or unrelated illness will require an animal to be euthanised. Animals must be monitored with enough frequency to promptly detect any pain or distress, whether anticipated as a result of the study or not.

Animals may be reported as used but not recorded as dead because they have been, for example:

* captured then released back to the wild
* recruited to a study while kept in the care of their owner, for example on a farm or through a vet clinic
* rehomed at the conclusion of the project.

## Understanding the 2023 statistics

### How does the number of animals used compare to previous years?

There was a 59% decrease in animal use in 2023 compared to 2022. This decrease is primarily due to a single project concluding in 2022 that used approximately 3.65 million poultry sourced from a commercial supplier. These animals were used for regulatory product testing, for the purposes of improving animal management/ production.

The number of animals reported fluctuates each year due to variables such as changes to the focus of funded projects, technological advances, and economic factors.

### Why are 42,929,498 embryonated eggs reported in 2023?

A total of 42,929,498 embryonated eggs were reported in 2023. This is a 31% decrease in embryonated egg use in 2023 compared to 2022. These embryonated eggs are reported distinct from other animal use given the scale, and as the category was first reported in 2018, to prevent the skewing of historical data. The embryonated eggs were primarily used for vaccine production.

To generate vaccine, early-stage embryonated chicken eggs are seeded with the current seasonal strain of the flu virus. Viral replication occurs in the embryonated eggs. The eggs are then harvested in the days following the midpoint of their incubation period.

# Part 2: Number of animals reported as used in 2023

In 2023, a total of 2,063,816 animals were reported to be used for research, teaching and testing (scientific procedures) in Victoria. The table below shows the number of animals used by type. There was a 59% decrease in animal use in 2023 compared to the reported 5,092,001 animals used in 2022.

This total number of animals reported excludes 42,929,498 embryonated eggs. All of these eggs were sourced from a commercial supplier. These eggs were primarily used for the production of influenza vaccines.

## Reported by animal type

Table 2.1 Number of animals reported as used by animal type

| Animal type | Number of animals |
| --- | --- |
| \*Guinea pig (lab) | 4,543 |
| \*Macaques | 119 |
| \*Marmosets | 74 |
| \*Mouse (lab) | 502,311 |
| \*Rabbit (lab) | 1,211 |
| \*Rat (lab) | 11,529 |
| Amphibians | 19,984 |
| Bird exotic captive | 50 |
| Bird exotic wild | 648 |
| Bird native captive | 595 |
| Bird native wild | 400,895 |
| Bird other | 5,157 |
| Cats (non-wild) | 302 |
| Cats (wild) | 154 |
| Cattle (domestic) | 21,447 |
| Cephalopods | 135 |
| Crustaceans | 27,167 |
| Dasyurids | 1,752 |
| Deer (domestic) | 85 |
| Dogs (non-wild) | 2,366 |
| Dogs, foxes (wild) | 2,104 |
| Exotic feral mammal other | 481 |
| Exotic Zoo mammal | 6 |
| Ferret (lab) | 427 |
| Fish | 298,724 |
| Goats (domestic) | 872 |
| Goats (wild) | 200 |
| Hares (wild) | 15 |
| Horses (domestic) | 999 |
| Koalas | 1,348 |
| Lizards | 7,196 |
| Macropods | 19,801 |
| Mice (wild) | 3,067 |
| Monotremes | 429 |
| Native mammal other | 70,263 |
| Native Rats, Mice | 9,891 |
| Other domestic mammals | 54 |
| Pigs (domestic) | 11,235 |
| Pigs (wild) | 18 |
| Possums, Gliders | 8,309 |
| Poultry | 518,310 |
| Rabbits (wild) | 1,654 |
| Rats (wild) | 63,260 |
| Reptile other | 490 |
| Seals, Sealions | 1,114 |
| Sheep (domestic) | 37,640 |
| Snakes | 922 |
| Tortoises/turtle | 2,396 |
| Whales, dolphins | 690 |
| Wombats | 1,377 |
| Total | 2,063,816 |

*\*Specified animals*

Table 2.2 Number of animals reported as used by animal type and project purpose

| Animal Type | Educational objectives | Environmental objectives | Improve animal management/ production | Maintenance/ improvement human/animal health/welfare | Understand human/animal biology | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| \*Guinea pig (lab) | 92 |  | 11 | 4,375 | 65 | **4,543** |
| \*Macaques |  |  |  | 16 | 103 | **119** |
| \*Marmosets |  |  |  | 11 | 63 | **74** |
| \*Mouse (lab) | 16,465 |  | 30,718 | 131,764 | 323,364 | **502,311** |
| \*Rabbit (lab) | 90 |  |  | 930 | 191 | **1,211** |
| \*Rat (lab) | 644 |  | 148 | 4,849 | 5,888 | **11,529** |
| Amphibians | 714 | 16,953 | 1,659 |  | 658 | **19,984** |
| Bird exotic captive | 50 |  |  |  |  | **50** |
| Bird exotic wild | 17 | 604 | 1 |  | 26 | **648** |
| Bird native captive | 29 | 83 |  |  | 483 | **595** |
| Bird native wild | 3,995 | 183,375 | 6 | 713 | 212,806 | **400,895** |
| Bird other | 15 | 5,000 |  | 140 | 2 | **5,157** |
| Cats (non-wild) | 132 |  | 28 | 138 | 4 | **302** |
| Cats (wild) | 1 | 153 |  |  |  | **154** |
| Cattle (domestic) | 3,470 | 300 | 7,058 | 10,619 |  | **21,447** |
| Cephalopods |  | 28 | 107 |  |  | **135** |
| Crustaceans | 3,460 | 11,271 | 11,385 |  | 1,051 | **27,167** |
| Dasyurids | 186 | 1,456 | 90 | 9 | 11 | **1,752** |
| Deer (domestic) |  | 84 |  | 1 |  | **85** |
| Dogs (non-wild) | 1,136 | 1,140 | 18 | 67 | 5 | **2,366** |
| Dogs, foxes (wild) | 10 | 2,069 |  | 25 |  | **2,104** |
| Exotic feral mammal other |  | 110 | 105 | 266 |  | **481** |
| Exotic Zoo mammal |  |  |  | 6 |  | **6** |
| Ferret (lab) |  |  |  | 206 | 221 | **427** |
| Fish | 889 | 210,875 | 15,061 | 518 | 71,381 | **298,724** |
| Goats (domestic) | 219 |  | 653 |  |  | **872** |
| Goats (wild) |  | 200 |  |  |  | **200** |
| Hares (wild) |  | 15 |  |  |  | **15** |
| Horses (domestic) | 192 | 8 |  | 767 | 32 | **999** |
| Koalas |  | 1,345 | 1 | 2 |  | **1,348** |
| Lizards | 85 | 6,556 | 58 | 121 | 376 | **7,196** |
| Macropods | 171 | 16,105 | 11 | 3,005 | 509 | **19,801** |
| Mice (wild) | 8 | 2,518 | 248 | 48 | 245 | **3,067** |
| Monotremes |  | 403 | 16 | 2 | 8 | **429** |
| Native mammal other | 64 | 69,534 | 35 | 217 | 413 | **70,263** |
| Native Rats, Mice | 401 | 9,490 |  |  |  | **9,891** |
| Other domestic mammals | 32 |  |  | 22 |  | **54** |
| Pigs (domestic) | 95 |  | 8,001 | 3,103 | 36 | **11,235** |
| Pigs (wild) |  | 18 |  |  |  | **18** |
| Possums, Gliders | 103 | 8,117 | 10 | 17 | 62 | **8,309** |
| Poultry | 543 |  | 473,163 | 43,134 | 1,470 | **518,310** |
| Rabbits (wild) |  | 1,654 |  |  |  | **1,654** |
| Rats (wild) | 7 | 52,628 | 10,625 |  |  | **63,260** |
| Reptile other | 1 | 447 |  | 3 | 39 | **490** |
| Seals, Sealions |  | 167 |  | 119 | 828 | **1,114** |
| Sheep (domestic) | 33,140 | 75 | 551 | 3,713 | 161 | **37,640** |
| Snakes | 76 | 743 |  | 92 | 11 | **922** |
| Tortoises/turtle | 5 | 2,147 |  | 8 | 236 | **2,396** |
| Whales, dolphins |  | 690 |  |  |  | **690** |
| Wombats |  | 1,370 |  | 7 |  | **1,377** |
| Total | 66,537 | 607,731 | 559,767 | 209,033 | 620,748 | 2,063,816 |

*\*Specified animals.*

Table 2.3 Number of non-specified animals used by animal type by source

| Animal Type | Animals in their natural habitat | Australian captive colony/zoo | Commercial supplier | Other source | Own derivation | Private companion animals | Private donation | Privately owned animals on a farm | Removed from Aust. natural habitat | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Amphibians | 16,562 | 1,937 | 518 |  | 131 |  |  |  | 836 | **19,984** |
| Bird exotic captive |  |  |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  | **50** |
| Bird exotic wild | 622 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 26 | **648** |
| Bird native captive |  | 91 | 29 |  | 453 |  | 22 |  |  | **595** |
| Bird native wild | 400,817 | 78 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **400,895** |
| Bird other | 5,000 |  | 140 | 2 |  | 15 |  |  |  | **5,157** |
| Cats (non-wild) |  |  | 11 | 127 |  | 164 |  |  |  | **302** |
| Cats (wild) | 153 |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | **154** |
| Cattle (domestic) | 131 |  | 2,177 | 652 | 2,545 |  | 19 | 15,923 |  | **21,447** |
| Cephalopods | 135 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **135** |
| Crustaceans | 24,513 | 1,540 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1,114 | **27,167** |
| Dasyurids | 1,615 | 59 |  |  | 78 |  |  |  |  | **1,752** |
| Deer (domestic) | 84 |  |  |  |  | 1 |  |  |  | **85** |
| Dogs (non-wild) | 1,129 | 2 |  | 10 | 2 | 1,205 |  | 18 |  | **2,366** |
| Dogs, foxes (wild) | 2,040 | 25 |  |  |  |  |  | 39 |  | **2,104** |
| Exotic feral mammal other | 215 |  |  |  | 266 |  |  |  |  | **481** |
| Exotic Zoo mammal |  | 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **6** |
| Ferret (lab) |  |  | 427 |  |  |  |  |  |  | **427** |
| Fish | 220,228 | 43 | 8,535 | 1,113 | 65,716 | 10 |  |  | 3,079 | **298,724** |
| Goats (domestic) |  |  |  | 206 |  |  |  | 666 |  | **872** |
| Goats (wild) | 200 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **200** |
| Hares (wild) | 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **15** |
| Horses (domestic) | 12 |  | 119 | 27 | 33 | 156 | 73 | 579 |  | **999** |
| Koalas | 1,346 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2 | **1,348** |
| Lizards | 7,027 |  | 21 | 8 |  | 88 | 1 |  | 51 | **7,196** |
| Macropods | 19,643 |  |  |  | 153 |  |  |  | 5 | **19,801** |
| Mice (wild) | 2,723 |  | 96 |  |  |  |  |  | 248 | **3,067** |
| Monotremes | 415 | 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 | **429** |
| Native mammal other | 70,242 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 21 | **70,263** |
| Native Rats, Mice | 9,778 | 95 |  |  |  | 11 |  |  | 7 | **9,891** |
| Other domestic mammals |  |  | 30 | 16 |  | 8 |  |  |  | **54** |
| Pigs (domestic) |  |  | 242 | 50 | 10,868 |  | 2 | 73 |  | **11,235** |
| Pigs (wild) | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **18** |
| Possums, Gliders | 8,298 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 11 | **8,309** |
| Poultry |  |  | 515,952 | 197 | 2,000 | 72 | 58 | 31 |  | **518,310** |
| Rabbits (wild) | 1,654 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **1,654** |
| Rats (wild) | 63,260 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **63,260** |
| Reptile other | 464 | 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 11 | **490** |
| Seals, Sealions | 1,114 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **1,114** |
| Sheep (domestic) |  |  | 1,770 | 1,369 | 1,220 | 22 | 45 | 33,214 |  | **37,640** |
| Snakes | 811 | 2 | 19 | 4 |  | 63 | 2 |  | 21 | **922** |
| Tortoises/turtle | 2,361 |  | 3 |  |  |  | 2 |  | 30 | **2,396** |
| Whales, dolphins | 690 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **690** |
| Wombats | 1,370 | 1 |  | 4 |  |  |  |  | 2 | **1,377** |
| Total | 864,685 | 3,907 | 530,089 | 3,785 | 83,465 | 1,816 | 274 | 50,543 | 5,465 | 1,544,029 |

Table 2.4 Number of specified animals used by animal type by source

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Animal Type | \*Other | \*Own Derivation | \*Imported from overseas | \*Interstate institution authorised to distribute specified animals | \*Victoria – Specified Animals Breeding Licenced Supplier | Total |
| \*Guinea pig (lab) | 45 | 4,397 |  | 65 | 36 | **4,543** |
| \*Macaques | 2 |  |  |  | 117 | **119** |
| \*Marmosets |  |  |  |  | 74 | **74** |
| \*Mouse (lab) | 5,670 | 320,387 | 3,485 | 105,997 | 66,772 | **502,311** |
| \*Rabbit (lab) | 272 | 835 |  | 71 | 33 | **1,211** |
| \*Rat (lab) | 147 | 2,726 |  | 2,564 | 6,092 | **11,529** |
| Total | 6,136 | 328,345 | 3,485 | 108,697 | 73,124 | 519,787 |

*\*Specified animals.*

## Reported by project benefit

Table 2.5 Number of animals reported as used by animal type, by project benefits

| Animal Type | Development of techniques | Domestic animal management/ production | Education (demonstration) | Environmental monitoring/ecology | Fundamental biology/physiology | Production of biological products | Regulatory product testing | Training (student use of animals) | Vertebrate pest management | Wildlife management/ conservation | Diseases-animal | Diseases-human | Diseases-zoonotic | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| \*Guinea pig (lab) | 42 |  | 34 |  | 45 | 11 | 3,983 | 58 |  |  |  | 370 |  | **4,543** |
| \*Macaques |  |  |  |  | 4 | 76 |  |  |  |  |  | 39 |  | **119** |
| \*Marmosets |  |  |  |  | 56 | 7 |  |  |  |  |  | 11 |  | **74** |
| \*Mouse (lab) | 549 |  | 1,265 | 12 | 235,292 | 1,693 | 11,582 | 15,200 |  |  | 7,773 | 227,796 | 1,149 | **502,311** |
| \*Rabbit (lab) |  |  |  |  |  | 203 | 646 | 90 |  |  |  | 272 |  | **1,211** |
| \*Rat (lab) | 35 |  | 145 |  | 5,517 | 81 |  | 499 |  |  | 139 | 5,113 |  | **11,529** |
| Amphibians |  |  | 502 | 12,147 | 58 |  |  | 212 | 377 | 6,319 | 369 |  |  | **19,984** |
| Bird exotic captive |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 50 |  |  |  |  |  | **50** |
| Bird exotic wild |  |  |  | 558 | 26 |  |  | 17 |  | 47 |  |  |  | **648** |
| Bird native captive | 3 |  |  |  | 483 |  |  | 29 |  | 80 |  |  |  | **595** |
| Bird native wild |  |  | 3,720 | 234,214 | 794 |  |  | 275 |  | 161,649 |  |  | 243 | **400,895** |
| Bird other |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |  | 15 |  | 5,000 | 140 |  |  | **5,157** |
| Cats (non-wild) |  | 124 | 6 |  | 2 |  |  | 126 |  |  | 34 | 10 |  | **302** |
| Cats (wild) |  |  |  | 68 |  |  |  | 1 |  | 85 |  |  |  | **154** |
| Cattle (domestic) |  | 13,247 | 8 | 171 |  |  |  | 3,462 |  | 129 | 4,430 |  |  | **21,447** |
| Cephalopods |  |  |  | 28 |  |  |  |  |  | 107 |  |  |  | **135** |
| Crustaceans |  |  | 3,460 | 7,734 |  |  |  |  |  | 15,973 |  |  |  | **27,167** |
| Dasyurids |  |  |  | 566 | 11 |  |  | 186 |  | 932 | 57 |  |  | **1,752** |
| Deer (domestic) | 1 |  |  | 82 |  |  |  |  |  | 2 |  |  |  | **85** |
| Dogs (non-wild) | 38 | 8 | 24 | 12 | 6 |  |  | 1,112 |  | 1,130 | 36 |  |  | **2,366** |
| Dogs, foxes (wild) |  |  |  | 1,197 |  |  |  | 10 |  | 897 |  |  |  | **2,104** |
| Exotic feral mammal other |  |  |  | 80 |  |  |  |  | 105 | 30 |  | 266 |  | **481** |
| Exotic Zoo mammal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4 |  |  | 2 | **6** |
| Ferret (lab) |  |  |  |  | 66 |  |  |  |  |  |  | 329 | 32 | **427** |
| Fish |  | 6,504 | 820 | 194,419 | 44,666 |  |  | 69 | 229 | 29,730 |  | 22,287 |  | **298,724** |
| Goats (domestic) |  | 415 | 12 |  |  |  |  | 207 |  |  | 238 |  |  | **872** |
| Goats (wild) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 200 |  |  |  | **200** |
| Hares (wild) |  |  |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |  | 13 |  |  |  | **15** |
| Horses (domestic) | 4 | 12 | 6 | 5 | 32 | 64 | 25 | 186 |  | 3 | 662 |  |  | **999** |
| Koalas |  |  |  | 823 |  |  |  |  |  | 523 | 2 |  |  | **1,348** |
| Lizards |  |  | 13 | 4,557 | 2 |  |  | 72 |  | 2,402 | 70 |  | 80 | **7,196** |
| Macropods |  |  | 70 | 9,155 | 509 |  |  | 101 |  | 6,961 | 3,005 |  |  | **19,801** |
| Mice (wild) |  |  |  | 680 |  |  |  | 8 | 311 | 1,972 |  | 96 |  | **3,067** |
| Monotremes |  |  |  | 181 |  |  |  |  |  | 247 | 1 |  |  | **429** |
| Native mammal other |  |  | 15 | 26,509 |  |  |  | 49 |  | 43,452 | 238 |  |  | **70,263** |
| Native Rats, Mice |  |  | 88 | 1,714 |  |  |  | 313 |  | 7,776 |  |  |  | **9,891** |
| Other domestic mammals |  |  | 16 |  |  | 22 |  | 16 |  |  |  |  |  | **54** |
| Pigs (domestic) | 76 | 10,886 | 23 |  |  | 47 | 24 | 72 |  |  |  | 26 | 81 | **11,235** |
| Pigs (wild) |  |  |  | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **18** |
| Possums, Gliders |  |  | 45 | 2,460 |  |  |  | 58 |  | 5,729 | 17 |  |  | **8,309** |
| Poultry | 528 | 41,869 | 210 |  | 1,470 | 979 | 470,738 | 333 |  |  | 1,674 | 472 | 37 | **518,310** |
| Rabbits (wild) |  |  |  | 264 |  |  |  |  |  | 1,390 |  |  |  | **1,654** |
| Rats (wild) |  |  |  | 51,617 |  |  |  | 7 | 10,625 | 1,011 |  |  |  | **63,260** |
| Reptile other |  | 3 |  | 443 | 39 |  |  | 1 |  | 4 |  |  |  | **490** |
| Seals, Sealions |  |  |  | 2 |  |  |  |  |  | 1,112 |  |  |  | **1,114** |
| Sheep (domestic) | 94 | 482 | 6,802 | 75 | 637 | 17 | 346 | 26,338 |  |  | 159 | 2,690 |  | **37,640** |
| Snakes |  |  | 12 | 562 |  |  |  | 64 |  | 194 | 25 |  | 65 | **922** |
| Tortoises/turtle |  |  | 2 | 719 | 176 |  |  | 3 |  | 1,496 |  |  |  | **2,396** |
| Whales, dolphins |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | 690 |  |  |  | **690** |
| Wombats |  |  |  | 1,248 |  |  |  |  |  | 122 | 7 |  |  | **1,377** |
| Total | 1,370 | 73,550 | 17,298 | 552,322 | 289,893 | 3,200 | 487,344 | 49,239 | 11,647 | 297,411 | 19,076 | 259,777 | 1,689 | 2,063,816 |

*\*Specified animals.*

Table 2.6 Number of animals used, by project impact by project benefit

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Project Impact | Development of techniques | Domestic animal management/ production | Education (demonstration) | Environmental monitoring/ecology | Fundamental biology/physiology | Production of biological products | Regulatory product testing | Training (student use of animals) | Vertebrate pest management | Wildlife management/ conservation | Diseases-animal | Diseases-human | Diseases-zoonotic | Total |
| Observational study involving minor interference | 105 | 60,328 | 5,374 | 358,849 | 51,311 |  | 466,861 | 29,523 | 10,964 | 243,485 | 4,249 | 22,895 |  | **1,253,944** |
| Animal unconscious without recovery | 180 | 85 | 955 | 3,595 | 38,514 | 1,090 |  | 1,598 |  | 10,340 | 1,511 | 31,385 |  | **89,253** |
| Minor conscious intervention | 80 | 5,693 | 10,964 | 143,998 | 56,950 | 919 | 753 | 15,445 | 425 | 28,506 | 8,903 | 63,487 | 947 | **337,070** |
| Minor operative procedures with recovery | 8 | 6,606 |  | 219 | 23,902 | 336 | 8 | 848 |  | 404 | 221 | 33,250 | 32 | **65,834** |
| Minor physiological challenge | 779 | 790 |  | 45,206 | 89,706 | 329 | 5,314 | 1,666 | 246 | 12,218 | 2,062 | 41,458 | 702 | **200,476** |
| Surgery with recovery | 218 | 18 | 5 | 455 | 10,778 | 3 | 5 | 117 |  | 9 | 600 | 19,252 |  | **31,460** |
| Moderate to major physiological challenge |  | 30 |  |  | 18,732 | 523 | 9,949 | 42 | 12 | 2,449 | 1,530 | 47,588 | 8 | **80,863** |
| Death as an end point |  |  |  |  |  |  | 4,454 |  |  |  |  | 462 |  | **4,916** |
| Total | 1,370 | 73,550 | 17,298 | 552,322 | 289,893 | 3,200 | 487,344 | 49,239 | 11,647 | 297,411 | 19,076 | 259,777 | 1,689 | 2,063,816 |

Table 2.7 Number of animals reported as used by project purpose

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Project purpose | Number of animals |
| Educational objectives | 66,537 |
| Environmental objectives | 607,731 |
| Improve animal management/production | 559,767 |
| Maintenance/improvement human/animal health/welfare | 209,033 |
| Understand human/animal biology | 620,748 |
| Total | 2,063,816 |

## Number of animals used and animal deaths

Investigators must plan for animals at the conclusion of a project. If appropriate, animals are returned to normal husbandry conditions or their natural habitat. When results rely on tissue analysis, this usually requires the humane killing of the animals. Opportunities to rehome animals that are not needed for tissue analysis are considered wherever possible. Under certain conditions, with special justification, an AEC may approve an animal to be used in a subsequent project.

Table 2.8 Number of animals used and deaths by type

| Animal type | Number of animals | Number of deaths |
| --- | --- | --- |
| \*Guinea pig (lab) | 4,543 | 4,464 |
| \*Macaques | 119 | 14 |
| \*Marmosets | 74 | 39 |
| \*Mouse (lab) | 502,311 | 438,351 |
| \*Rabbit (lab) | 1,211 | 974 |
| \*Rat (lab) | 11,529 | 10,498 |
| Amphibians | 19,984 | 1,532 |
| Bird exotic captive | 50 | 0 |
| Bird exotic wild | 648 | 26 |
| Bird native captive | 595 | 257 |
| Bird native wild | 400,895 | 19 |
| Bird other | 5,157 | 142 |
| Cats (non-wild) | 302 | 12 |
| Cats (wild) | 154 | 0 |
| Cattle (domestic) | 21,447 | 73 |
| Cephalopods | 135 | 3 |
| Crustaceans | 27,167 | 2,118 |
| Dasyurids | 1,752 | 14 |
| Deer (domestic) | 85 | 0 |
| Dogs (non-wild) | 2,366 | 3 |
| Dogs, foxes (wild) | 2,104 | 2 |
| Exotic feral mammal other | 481 | 82 |
| Exotic Zoo mammal | 6 | 0 |
| Ferret (lab) | 427 | 328 |
| Fish | 298,724 | 66,431 |
| Goats (domestic) | 872 | 35 |
| Goats (wild) | 200 | 0 |
| Hares (wild) | 15 | 0 |
| Horses (domestic) | 999 | 2 |
| Koalas | 1,348 | 8 |
| Lizards | 7,196 | 25 |
| Macropods | 19,801 | 158 |
| Mice (wild) | 3,067 | 101 |
| Monotremes | 429 | 0 |
| Native mammal other | 70,263 | 27 |
| Native Rats, Mice | 9,891 | 15 |
| Other domestic mammals | 54 | 3 |
| Pigs (domestic) | 11,235 | 1,179 |
| Pigs (wild) | 18 | 6 |
| Possums, Gliders | 8,309 | 7 |
| Poultry | 518,310 | 10,415 |
| Rabbits (wild) | 1,654 | 0 |
| Rats (wild) | 63,260 | 1 |
| Reptile other | 490 | 11 |
| Seals, Sealions | 1,114 | 2 |
| Sheep (domestic) | 37,640 | 2,963 |
| Snakes | 922 | 3 |
| Tortoises/turtle | 2,396 | 52 |
| Whales, dolphins | 690 | 0 |
| Wombats | 1,377 | 0 |
| Total | 2,063,816 | 540,395 |

*\*Specified animals.*

# Part 3: Animal use statistics from 2014 to 2023



## Number of animals used in research, teaching and testing from 2014 – 2023

The number of animals used in research, teaching and testing in 2023 was 2,063,816.

Figure 3.1 Number of animals used, 2014 - 2023

Figure 3.2 Percentage of animals used by project purpose, 2019 – 2023

Figure 3.3 Percentage of animals used by impact type, 2019 – 2023

Note: Less than 0.6% of animals experienced death as an endpoint each year over the last 5 years.

## Number of specified animals used from 2014 – 2023

Figure 3.4 Number of specified mice used, 2014 – 2023

Figure 3.5 Number of specified animals, excluding mice and non-human primates 2014 – 2023

Figure 3.6 Number of non-human primates, 2014 – 2023

Figure 3.7 Number of specified mice in breeding colonies, 2014 – 2023

## Number of animals used in breeding colonies from 2014 – 2023

Table 3.1 Number of non-genetically modified specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2014 – 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  | Year |  |  |  |  |  |
| Animal type | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Guinea pigs | 345 | 294 | 96 | 48 | 3,202 | 1,543 | 1,207 | 2,183 | 1,344 | 2,327 |
| Macaques | 263 | 282 | 274 | 476 | 258 | 271 | 175 | 158 | 175 | 195 |
| Marmosets | 305 | 440 | 463 | 744 | 309 | 228 | 231 | 210 | 228 | 188 |
| Mice | 420,126 | 384,762 | 379,198 | 649,519 | 345,107 | 444,733 | 292,840 | 309,679 | 237,073 | 275,978 |
| Rabbits | 133 | 179 | 159 | 86 | 793 | 46 | 531 | 540 | 1,370 | 1,328 |
| Rats | 25,546 | 23,744 | 27,754 | 40,719 | 20,606 | 28,319 | 24,089 | 30,040 | 23,561 | 21,119 |
| Total | 446,718 | 409,701 | 407,944 | 691,592 | 370,275 | 475,140 | 319,073 | 342,810 | 263,751 | 301,135 |

Table 3.2 Number of genetically modified specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2014 – 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  | Year |  |  |  |  |  |
| Animal type | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Mice | 568,495 | 582,925 | 683,769 | 829,940 | 704,297 | 908,083 | 652,671 | 600,716 | 661,064 | 716,196 |
| Rats | 4,271 | 2,714 | 2,286 | 2,907 | 2,160 | 2,073 | 1,408 | 1,570 | 1,383 | 2,699 |
| Total | 572,766 | 585,639 | 686,055 | 832,847 | 706,457 | 910,156 | 654,079 | 602,286 | 662,447 | 718,895 |

In 2020 a new reporting category was introduced, to capture non-specified animals in breeding colonies. This was designed to improve data accuracy for these animals. Previously, these animals may have been reported as domestic animal management/production.

Table 3.3 Number of non-genetically modified non-specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2020 - 2023

| Animal type | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Amphibians | 274 | 287 | 1,846 | 123 |
| Bird native captive | 0 | 31 | 23 | 0 |
| Bird other | 0 | 0 | 23 | 0 |
| Cats (non-wild) | 21 | 58 | 25 | 29 |
| Cattle (domestic) | 338 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dasyurids | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Exotic feral mammal other | 393 | 99 | 84 | 0 |
| Fish | 87,636 | 38,340 | 12,536 | 158,257 |
| Horses (domestic) | 19 | 52 | 29 | 72 |
| Lizards | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| Macropods | 53 | 100 | 42 | 35 |
| Native Rats, Mice | 0 | 0 | 33 | 0 |
| Poultry | 52 | 337 | 434 | 383 |
| Reptile other | 0 | 12 | 6 | 0 |
| Sheep (domestic) | 1,136 | 230 | 258 | 134 |
| Laboratory mammal (non-specified) | 344 | 707 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 90,274 | 40,253 | 15,355 | 159,033 |

Table 3.4 Number of genetically modified non-specified animals in breeding colonies by animal type, 2020 - 2023

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Animal type | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Amphibians | 175 | 67 | 0 | 0 |
| Bird other | 34 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fish | 59,248 | 196,335 | 174,710 | 68,362 |
| Pigs (domestic) | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poultry | 270 | 441 | 65 | 0 |
| Laboratory mammal (non-specified) | 0 | 0 | 558 | 0 |
| Total | 59,782 | 196,843 | 175,333 | 68,362 |

## Number of embryonated avian eggs used in research, teaching and testing from 2018 – 2023

The number of embryonated avian eggs used in research, teaching and testing in 2023 was 42,929,498.

Figure 3.8 Number of embryonated avian eggs used, 2018 – 2023

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Table 4.1 Reporting categories

| Category | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Observation involving minor interference | Studies in which the normal activities of animals are minimally impacted on. For example, laboratory animals held in cages for acclimatisation; a feeding trial, such as Digestible Energy determination of feed in a balanced diet; behavioural or growth study with minor environmental manipulation; or teaching of normal, non-invasive husbandry such as handling, grooming, etc. |
| Unconscious without recovery | Studies in which animals are humanely rendered unconscious under controlled circumstances (i.e. not in a field situation) with as little pain or distress as possible. Capture methods are not required. Any pain is minor and brief and does not require analgesia. Procedures are carried out on the unconscious animal that is then killed without regaining consciousness. Examples include animals (including fish) in laboratory killed painlessly for dissection, biochemical analysis, etc.; or teaching of surgical techniques using live, anaesthetised patients that are not allowed to recover following the procedure. |
| Minor conscious intervention | Studies in which animals are subjected to minor procedures that would normally not require anaesthesia. Any pain is minor, although some distress may occur as a result of trapping or handling. For example, capture and release (with or without tagging) of animals (including fish) in the wild; trapping and humane euthanasia for collection of specimens; ear notching for identification of new line GM animals; injections, blood sampling in conscious animal; minor dietary or environmental deprivation or manipulation, such as feeding nutrient-deficient diets for short periods; or stomach tubing, branding, disbudding, shearing, etc. |
| Minor operative procedure with recovery | Studies in which animals are anaesthetised for a minor procedure such as cannulation or skin biopsy. Animals are allowed to recover. Depending on the procedure, pain may be minor or moderate and post-operative analgesia may be appropriate. For example, biopsies or blood sampling under anaesthesia or sedation; cannulations under anaesthesia or sedation; sedation/anaesthesia for relocation, examination or injections/blood sampling; field capture using chemical restraint methods. |
| Minor physiological challenge | Studies in which there is interference with the animals’ physiological or psychological processes. The challenge may cause mild or short-lived pain/distress, or any pain/distress is quickly and effectively alleviated. For example, electrofishing; minor infection, minor or moderate phenotypic modification, early oncogenesis; arthritis studies with pain alleviation; prolonged deficient diets, induction of metabolic disease; polyclonal antibody production; or antiserum production. |
| Surgery with recovery | Studies in which animals are anaesthetised for a major procedure such as abdominal or orthopaedic surgery following which the animal is allowed to recover. Post-operative pain should be managed with analgesia. For example, orthopaedic surgery; abdominal or thoracic surgery; transplant surgery; or surgery under anaesthesia for implantation of telemetry tags. |
| Moderate to major physiological challenge | Studies in which there is interference with the animals’ physiological or psychological processes. The procedure/s may cause moderate or longer lasting pain/distress. Pain or distress may not be able to be entirely alleviated, either due to the nature of the process (e.g., neurological impairment) or because of the experimental question (e.g., pain studies). Other examples include: severe infection, significant disability due to genetic modification, induction of cancer without pain alleviation; arthritis studies without pain alleviation, uncontrolled metabolic disease; isolation or environmental deprivation for extended periods. |
| Death as an endpoint | Studies where the death of the animal is essential for the scientific result, such as for efficacy of some antivenoms, development of pest control agents and studies of acutely fatal conditions. In these studies, death is a deliberate measure in the procedure and there can be no intervention to kill the animal humanely before death occurs in the course of the procedure.  ‘Death as an endpoint’ procedures must be approved by the Minister for Agriculture. They do not include studies where animals are humanely killed at the conclusion of the experiment. |