



European Animal  
Research Association

## EARA News Digest 2021 - Week 47

Welcome to your Monday morning update, [from EARA](#), on the latest news in biomedical science, policy and openness on animal research.

### Media

## Tackling climate change with animal research

Marking the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference, [The Roslin Institute](#), Edinburgh, UK, [has highlighted](#) how its animal research can assist sustainable farming ([see video](#)).

In one project, researchers are studying the DNA of microbes in the stomachs of cattle and sheep, to understand if it is possible to reduce the [levels of methane](#) - a greenhouse gas closely associated with climate change - and create 'low-emission cattle'.

Another study looks at ways to keep livestock healthy and stop the spread of disease, by [gene editing in pigs](#) to prevent common infections and therefore reduce their carbon footprint.

Roslin is also part of [The Centre for Tropical Livestock Genetics and Health](#), which seeks to remove losses due to disease and improve livestock food production in tropical countries.



## Policy

### ‘Hearts and minds’ approach needed to talk about research (video)

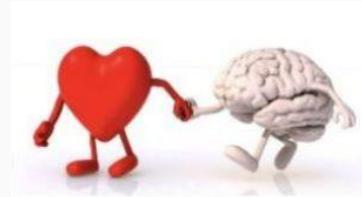
The biomedical community needs to ‘shift the balance’ to talk more about the benefits of using animals in research, EARA executive director, Kirk Leech, told the Spanish scientific community last week ([see video](#) 15mins).

In a speech at the [XVI congress](#) of the Spanish Society for Laboratory Animal Sciences (SECAL), he explained why it is now more important than ever to speak up about animal research, following the [recent vote](#) by the European Parliament for a phase-out of animal research.

Kirk said the sector had ‘dug itself into a bit of a hole’ by focusing too much on animal welfare and merely asking the public to trust us.

He said that EARA believed that a ‘hearts and minds’ approach was now needed, that provided compelling stories about the success of animal research, such as in developing Covid vaccines, as well as the facts and figures about its benefits.

To mark the SECAL conference, EARA also released the latest in its [#LetsTalkSciComm](#) YouTube series with [Lluís Montoliu](#) of CNB-CSIC, Spain, sharing his reasons for using YouTube as a platform for communicating about complex genetics and rare disease research.



Also during the conference, Pilar Bringas, of EARA member Complutense University of Madrid explained how ([1hr 7mins in Spanish](#)) it had worked together with EARA to [improve its website](#) including adding videos and pictures.

## Media

### Journalism award for animal research article

An article reporting on Covid-19 research at the Biomedical Primate Research Centre, Netherlands, has won a Silver Award in the [AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards](#).

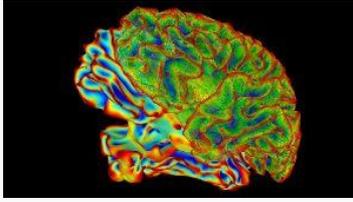
In the [feature article](#) (in Dutch) in *De Volkskrant*, reporter [Maartje Bakker](#) followed two rhesus monkeys through Covid-19 vaccine testing, with interviews from researchers, caregivers, and those opposed to animal research.

Judges praised her balanced and fair approach to the story, with Sarah Zielinski, editor of [Science News for Students](#), saying she "gained incredible access to obtain this moving story about animals sacrificed in the quest for Covid-19 vaccines".

In another science award, the Danish 3Rs-Centre [3Rs prize](#) went to [Professor Anne Marie Vinggaard](#) for her commitment to promotion of animal-free methods in molecular toxicology.

## Research





## Progression of Alzheimer's revealed by human data

Using human data, scientists at the [University of Cambridge](#), UK, [have found](#) that Alzheimer's progresses in a different way than previously indicated in mice studies.

The team used post-mortem brain samples from Alzheimer's patients, as well as scans from living patients, to track tau - one of two key proteins in the disease.

The [findings](#), published in the journal *Science Advances*, showed that instead of starting from a single point and initiating reactions leading to the death of brain cells, Alzheimer's reaches different regions of the brain at an early stage.

Previously, researchers had relied largely on animal models to study the disease, but results from mice had instead suggested that Alzheimer's spreads quickly.

EARA executive director, Kirk Leech said: "It's good science to look for the best model to answer a specific question and when the right human data is available it is likely to provide more insights than using animals."

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