

Tightened control on laboratory animals and animal tests both in Japan and other countries

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Our society has become increasingly strict about laboratory animals and animal tests. Under such circumstances, those who are involved with animal experiments need to understand and comply with relevant laws and regulations more than ever. Therefore, they have shown strong interest not only in domestic trend and regulations but also in those of Europe and the U.S. This is a welcome trend and we can expect actual improvement of laboratory animal welfare. However, many of them show low level of attention in moves of OIE or ILAR and news reports on bans on animal experiments. They only know those facts.

On the other hand, for reasons of language difference and limited information, some people reacted sensitively and sometimes excessively without deep understanding of the fact and backgrounds. In addition, some people with fragmentary knowledge and information on situations of Europe and the U.S. tried to apply them in their facilities without knowledge of different social systems and backgrounds. In Japan, we are currently in the process of revising the Law for the Humane Treatment and Management of Animals. When this law was last revised in 2005, basic policies were presented by three ministries, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and a detailed guideline “Guidelines for Proper Conduct of Animal Experiments” was also presented by the Science Council of Japan. With a series of these movements, the concepts of 3Rs, five freedoms, and other concepts have been widely spread. It facilitated further understanding of laboratory animal welfare among animal experiment personnel. Ministry of the Environment set up Animal Welfare Subcommittee under Animal Welfare Group of Central Environment Council with the objective of amending the law. The subcommittee started the discussions from July, 2010, aiming at submission of the bill during regular Diet session in 2012.

However, after the last revision, have people involved with animal experiments fully responded to expectations and requests from our society or the public? It’s an open question. Therefore, in preparation for the next revision, we need to understand not only the situation of other countries such as European countries and the U.S., but also background information of the last revision as well as the situation after revision to analyze them. Having those in our minds, we need to fully understand what is discussed and what is required in Japan and other countries in order to conduct proper animal experiments and to comply with the next revision.