



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
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New Zealand

OIA-2023-4883

30 January 2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email of 11 December 2023, requesting further information on the use of animals by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). Specifically, your request is for:

- (1) *Please provide more details regarding the use of animals the NZ Defence Force is/was part of. Our request aimed to learn:*
 - *Exactly how often animals are being used.*
 - *How many animals are being used.*
 - *What is the endpoint for these animals (if they are killed, kept, or rehomed)?*

For example, you stated training for NZDF first responders at the University of Otago. We found a publication that included funding by the NZDF involving first aid research (<https://doi.org/10.1113/jp277629>). Was this the funding you mentioned in the second paragraph of your response? And if so, was this the only experiment funded since 2013?

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). As referenced in the response of 4 December 2023, the University of Otago provides specialist critical care training to NZDF first responders. This training is organised, managed, and delivered under the University's Animal Use Protocol as approved by its Animal Ethics Committee. Therefore, the NZDF does not hold the information with respect to how often the animals are used, how many animals are used, or what is the endpoint for the animals. NZDF records indicate that the only instance of funding is the research you reference above. The NZDF personnel listed (Alexandra Abelentseva, Paul Bowler, and Kate Stanbridge) contributed to data acquisition, study design and revision of the manuscript.

- (2) *In response to an OIA request, we received an application to the Massey Animal Ethics Committee involving 36 dogs in first aid training for the NZ police and Defence Force in 2017. Contrary to your statement in paragraph three of your response, this falls under the definition of animal use in the Animal Welfare Act. Are there more incidences that might have been left out from your response? For example, we found a publication about ballistic testing for forensic investigation research involving the NZDF (<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjmilitary-2019-001369>).*

The publication you refer to regarding *ballistic testing for forensic investigation research* relates to PhD research using items sourced through the food chain (butchers and/or abattoirs). In this case, there was no requirement for ethics approvals.

Military working Dog (MWD) handlers receive veterinary training from Massey University. MWDs and their handlers may be deployed to missions in New Zealand or overseas. MWDs are crucial operational enablers that contribute toward mission success and the effective maintenance of their health and welfare is vital to the NZDF's operational capability.

Part One, Section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 states in part:

(1) The purpose of this Part is to ensure that owners of animals and persons in charge of animals attend properly to the welfare of those animals.

(2) This Part accordingly -

(a) requires owners of animals, and persons in charge of animals, to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the physical, health, and behavioural needs of the animals are met in accordance with both -

(i) good practice; and

(ii) scientific knowledge; and

(b) requires owners of ill or injured animals, and persons in charge of such animals, to ensure that the animals receive treatment that alleviates any unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress from which the animals are suffering;

Training by Massey University has been developed to ensure that the NZDF meets the requirements to ensure the physical, health, and behavioural needs of the MWDs are met in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act.

(3) We feel optimistic about the change you made, only sourcing animal parts for your teaching rather than using live animals. You are correct that this does not fall under the Animal Welfare Act definition.

Can you confirm that the NZDF does not currently use live animals for research, testing, and teaching and has no intention of resuming their use in the future?

The NZDF does not currently use, or have plans to use, live animals for research, testing, and teaching.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF