

The British Heart Foundation

A catalogue of cruelty



The British Heart Foundation

A dossier of animal experiments financially supported by the BHF



The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is a well-respected charity with a considerable annual income (£136.9 million in 2013-2014). What many people do not know, however, is that the charity is heavily involved in funding experiments on animals. As well as causing immense suffering, animal research wastes valuable resources, since the results cannot be reliably translated to humans.

Since January 2014, Animal Aid has exposed nine experiments that have received financial support from the BHF. These have included dogs and pigs being deliberately given heart attacks, pregnant sheep being surgically mutilated and partially suffocated, and rats being deprived of oxygen for two weeks.

The research for our exposés is always based on the scientific papers that describe the experiments. These papers include a statement on funding, and this is where the BHF's financial support is acknowledged. The heart charity has, nonetheless, sometimes sought to distance itself from the experiments we have exposed. In other cases, the BHF has boasted about its funding of the experiments on its own website, and so has had no choice but to acknowledge its involvement.



Financial support from the public is critical to the BHF's multi-million pound research programme. That same public therefore has a right to be informed as to the nature of that research and make a judgement as to its practical and ethical value. We have therefore compiled a dossier of the BHF-supported experiments we have so far exposed. **The case studies in this report provide only a brief outline of the experiments, but they include links to more comprehensive information.**

Victims: 10 dogs



Dogs made to suffer heart attacks

Experiment:

- Anaesthetised dogs were deliberately given heart attacks by having their coronary arteries tied.
- A few days later, they were re-anaesthetised and had electrodes stitched over their hearts so that critically rapid heart rhythms could be induced through electrical stimulation.

Date:

Research published in 2014

Location:

Columbia University

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states that one of the researchers '*acknowledges funding from the British Heart Foundation (RG/10/11/28457 and Centre of Research Excellence)*'.¹

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/



Victims: 16 pigs

Pigs made to suffer heart attacks

Experiment:

- Anaesthetised pigs were injected with substances to create a blockage in their coronary arteries and cause a heart attack.
- Some of the victims suffered severe irregular heart rhythms and an unspecified number were subjected to resuscitation through electric shock and injection. **Half the pigs died at this stage of the study.**
- Three weeks later, the eight survivors had their hearts electrically stimulated to induce critically rapid heartbeats, followed by further shock resuscitation.
- The pigs' chests were then cut open and either their own cells or a saline solution was injected into the damaged area of their hearts. Recording devices were implanted under their skin, which collected data for four weeks before they were killed.

Date:

Research published in 2011

Location:

St Joseph's Translational Research Institute, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states that the study was 'sponsored by Symphony Medical Inc. and British Heart Foundation (RG05/009)'.²

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/

Victims: 27 'mongrel' dogs



Dogs subjected to 'heart-stretching' procedure

Experiment:

- The dogs' chests were opened (under anaesthetic) and their hearts exposed.
- Some then had a device sutured onto their hearts, which was used to stretch it for six hours.
- Heart dysfunction was induced by electrical stimulation, before the dogs were killed and their hearts dissected.

Date:

Research published in 2010

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states in its acknowledgements '*supported by the British Heart Foundation RG/05/009...*'³

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/

Victims: 12 pregnant sheep



Pregnant sheep surgically mutilated and suffocated

Experiment:

- The sheep were starved for 24 hours, then anaesthetised and surgically mutilated so that invasive recording devices could be inserted into the legs and major blood vessels of their unborn lambs.
- The ewes and unborn lambs were then subjected to two prolonged periods of suffocation – essentially by a bag being placed over the mothers' heads – before they were killed.
- The ewes spent their final days confined alone in a 'metabolic crate', a small cage in which they were experimented on and deprived of exercise and social contact with other sheep.

Date:

Research published in 2012

Location:

Cambridge University, UK

Financial support from BHF:

The published paper states that the work was supported by the BHF and one of the researchers involved has received a grant of more than £1 million from the BHF.⁴

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/british-heart-foundation-supports-appalling-experiment-on-pregnant-sheep/



Victims: 38 goats

Goats' heart rhythms surgically disrupted

Experiment:

- Ten female goats were subjected to repeated anaesthesia, blood sampling and dosing with a heart drug, as well as a naturally occurring chemical that affects blood pressure.
- Another 28 adults goats had a pacemaker device implanted, which was designed to disrupt their hearts' natural electrical activity. Some of the goats had to endure this being switched on for three separate 28-day periods.

Date:

Research published in 2010

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states that the study was funded by a BHF project grant, and that one of the researchers is 'supported by British Heart Foundation grant RG/05/009'.⁵

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/

Victims: 40 male rats



Rats deprived of oxygen

Experiment:

- The rats were given either nitrates (substances found in some green vegetables) or a saltwater solution.
- Twenty of the animals were then deprived of oxygen for two weeks by being confined in devices called 'hypoxia chambers' where they were forced to breathe air with a low concentration of oxygen.⁶

Date:

Research published in 2014

Location:

Cambridge University, UK

Financial support from BHF:

The BHF declared on its own website that it helped to fund the study.⁷

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/rats-deprived-of-oxygen-in-cruel-and-pointless-bhf-funded-research

**Victims: unknown
number of rats and mice**



Mice given heart attacks and rats brain damaged

Experiment:

- Anaesthetised mice had their chests opened up and were given heart attacks by having the flow of blood to their hearts blocked for between five and 30 minutes.
- In another experiment, rats deliberately bred to suffer strokes were anaesthetised and had the flow of blood to their brains blocked. They then had their necks broken, and their brains removed for analysis.
- Other brain-damaged rats were made to walk along a narrow beam to see how many times they fell before they were killed.⁸

Date:

Research published in 2014

Financial support from BHF:

The BHF declared on its own website that it helped to fund the study.⁹

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/BHF-supports-repulsive-experiments-on-rats-and-mice/

**Victims: unknown
number of guinea pigs**



Guinea pigs killed for dissection

Experiment:

- A number of guinea pigs were killed so their hearts could be removed, chemically treated and dissected.
- The paper does not state how the guinea pigs were killed, but legally permitted methods include neck breaking, a blow to the head, or – in more restricted circumstances – decapitation.

Date:

Research published in 2013

Location:

Imperial College, London. The college was the subject of a shocking undercover investigation published by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in 2013, and condemned by the Home Office as having a ‘widespread poor culture of care’.

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states: ‘*This work was funded by the British Heart Foundation grants FS/03/031/15498 and RG/10/11/28457.*’¹⁰

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/

Victims: 35 rats

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Rats killed and their hearts removed for testing

Experiment:

- Thirty five rats were killed and their hearts removed for testing. The experiment involved blocking blood flow to the excised hearts, restoring the flow, and administering a drug already used to prevent irregular heart rhythms in human patients.

Date:

Research published in 2013

Financial support from BHF:

Scientific paper states that research was ‘supported by a British Heart Foundation Programme grant (RG/10/11/28457) to one of the researchers.’ It mentions that one of the other researchers was supported by a British Heart Foundation Intermediate Research Fellowship.¹¹

More information:

www.victimsofcharity.org/bhfs-attempt-to-distance-itself-from-cruel-animal-experiments/

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