

PRESS RELEASE

Does size matter?

International Summer School on ethical, societal, legal and biological aspects of large animals as biomedical models

Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, 18 October 2011. – From 10 to 14 October the Europäische Akademie Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH and the Technische Universität München conducted an international summer school with junior researchers who met in Freising and Munich to discuss large animals as biomedical models.

The possibility to develop transgenic mice generated a lot of new research possibilities in biomedicine in the 1980s. Species that were interesting for research into human biomedicine – but that could not yet straightforwardly be genetically altered at the time – included primates, dogs, cats, pigs, sheep, goats and cattle. In animal biotechnology, it has become common to refer to these as “large animals” in contrast with the small laboratory rodents, and large animals used in biomedical experiments are often referred to as “large animal models”. Nowadays, technologies for genetic modification have been extended to many species, including large animals, and, hence, there is currently a dramatic increase in the possibilities for biomedical research with large animal models.

The scientific question behind a research project determines the relevant biological characteristics that guide evaluation of which species is best suited as model organism for the particular research project and choice of species may also depend on economic, practical, legal and ethical considerations. Animal protection law requires research with sentient animals to undergo ethical evaluation and balancing of potential goods with potential harms. There is often more moral concern – in the public and also in ethical committees – with regard to the experimental use of species with which we have closer bonds, or to which we ascribe more ability to suffer or higher cognitive abilities.

The different factors that may guide species choice in animal research were explored in the contributions by the Summer School’s junior researchers and additionally invited experts. The group covered the fields of veterinary medicine, animal biotechnology, animal welfare science, philosophy of science, law and ethics. The last session of the Summer School was open to the public and organised in co-operation with the Carl von Linde-Akademie (Technische Universität München). The Summer School’s junior participants presented a summary of the week’s work and discussed animal research

Contact:

Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen
wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH
Director: Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. C. F. Gethmann
Amtsgericht Koblenz HRB 13717
Wilhelmstraße 56 • 53474 Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler
Phone: +49 (0) 2641 973-300 • Telefax: +49 (0) 2641 973-320

Friederike Wütscher / Katharina Mader, M.A.
friederike.wuetscher@ea-aw.de
katharina.mader@ea-aw.de
www.ea-aw.de

ethics with professors in the field and members of the public.

The Summer School was jointly organised by the Europäische Akademie GmbH and the Chair of Livestock Biotechnology (Technische Universität München) and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Proceedings are in preparation.

Expert speakers:

- Karin Blumer (Novartis, Basel)
- Matthias Gutmann (Institute of Philosophy, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
- Robert Heeger (Department of Philosophy, Ethics Institute, University of Utrecht)
- Klaus Mainzer (Carl von Linde-Akademie, Technische Universität München)
- Ralf Müller-Terpitz (Faculty of Law, Universität Passau)
- Brigitte von Rechenberg (Competence Center for Applied Biotechnology and Molecular Medicine, Universität Zürich)
- Stephan Sellmaier (Competence Centre for Ethics, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
- Felix Thiele (Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH)
- Eckhard Wolf (Gene Center Munich, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Scientific co-ordination:

- Felix Thiele (Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH)
- Kristin Hagen (Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler GmbH)
- Angelika Schnieke (Chair of Livestock Biotechnology, Technische Universität München)

The Europäische Akademie deals with the scientific study of the consequences of scientific and technological advances for individuals, society and the natural environment. The main focus is on the examination of foreseeable mid- and long-term processes that are especially influenced by the natural and engineering sciences and the medical disciplines. As an independent scientific institution, the Europäische Akademie pursues a dialogue with the world of politics and society at large. The Europäische Akademie Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler gGmbH was founded in 1996 by the Federal State of Rhineland-Palatinate (Land Rheinland-Pfalz) and the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. – DLR). The Director of the academy and manager of the company is Professor Dr. phil. Dr. phil.h.c. Carl Friedrich Gethmann, who is a full Professor of Applied Philosophy at the Universität Duisburg-Essen. **Further information: www.ea-aw.org**