



SGV  swiss laboratory
animal science
association

15 NEWSLETTER
2020

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Word of the President

SGV in times of COVID-19 pandemic

Dear SGV members,

Welcome to the 51th edition of the SGV newsletter!

I hope this newsletter finds you well in these times of crisis.

The year 2020 has presented us with a number of personal and professional challenges. Nearly all personal meetings and conferences this year had to be cancelled or being transformed into virtual meetings. Of course, it is possible to impart knowledge via virtual meetings but these are not able to replace the personal contact and the personal exchange of experiences as well as personal relationships.

In addition, some of the animal research needed to be cancelled which resulted in an additional burden for the personnel working with animals.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected of course our planned personal SGV meeting in November in Lausanne too. With a heavy heart we had to cancel and postpone this meeting. Furthermore, the SGV Board decided to abstain from a virtual meeting and to use the money instead for the support of the communication about animal research in Switzerland, especially in view of the upcoming vote for the “total ban of animal research” initiative, see also under “Update about ongoing initiatives related to animal research in Switzerland”. In this context, our planned joint symposium in the Suisse Romandie on “transparency in animal research” together with LS2 had to be cancelled and postponed too.

For the SGV meeting 2021 we had to decide to have a virtual meeting as we cannot predict the pandemic situation for end of next year. Our Scientific Committee is currently working on the details and we will inform you accordingly in due time about the schedule. We are planning to have 4 three-hour Friday afternoon sessions. We will keep the date for our General Assembly meeting on December 7th, 2021, also foreseen virtually. Let us be optimistic and hope that we can meet again in person in 2022!

In the following part of this newsletter, you will find the summary of past year’s SGV activities as well as info about the new SGV/SAVIR flyer on animal research that has been developed in a joint effort with SAVIR (Swiss Association of Veterinarians in Industry and Research) in collaboration with EARA (European Animal Research Association). The Flyer, a highlight for SGV and SAVIR for 2020, has been posted on our SGV webpage, see link below. Please note that SGV has a new web appearance within the SCNAT environment that you will find here: <https://sgv.org/de>.

The annual meeting 2019 in Zürich was dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the 3Rs “60 years of 3Rs principles, 20 years after their revival and now”. On the occasion of the anniversary, we have

provided an award for each “R” category. The Refinement award was given to Prof. Jane Hurst for her non-aversive handling technique in mice. The Reduction award went to Prof. Hanno Würbel for his work on systematic variation (heterogenization) to improve reproducibility and finally, Prof. Patrycja Nowak-Sliwinska was awarded for her alternatives for mammalian screening models. The interviews with all three awardees have been recorded and you will find the videos here: <https://sgv.org/de>.

Please welcome also two new members within our SGV Board and Scientific Committee in 2020:

- PD Dr. Paulin Jirkof, 3Rs Coordinator at the University of Zurich. Paulin is replacing Beat Riederer in the SGV Board in his role for the liaison with our scientific journal LAJ;
- Dr. Dr. Stefanie Schindler, owner of consultancy platform Viva3R. Stefanie used to act as a 3R consultant for the Scientific committee and is a new official member of the Scientific Committee.

All that remains for me is to wish you and your families all the best for the upcoming holiday season, stay healthy and always try to see the positive aspects of this current situation. I hope and look forward to meeting you again even if it can only be virtual next year for our SGV afternoon sessions and at our SGV General Assembly on December 7th, 2021.

All the best and take care









Birgit Ledermann

President of the SGV









Presentation of the SGV board members

The board of the SGV meets three to four times a year to review the on-going activities and define the future actions to be undertaken for the development of the society and its outreach for the scientific world as well as for the lay society at large. A guest SAVIR representative, Dr Maïke Heimann, also joins for the SGV board meetings.

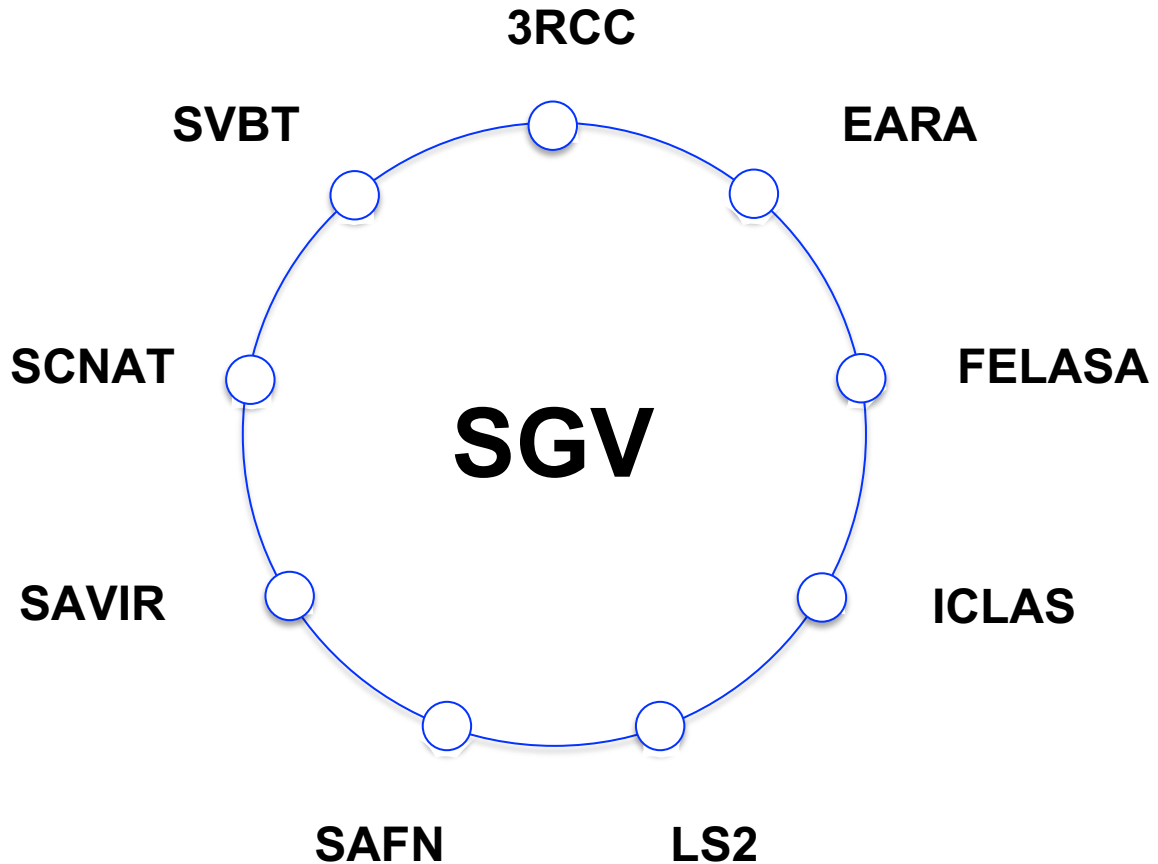
<p>SGV President Dr Birgit Ledermann</p>		<p>Head of the Scientific Committee Dr Isabelle Desbaillets</p>	
<p>Vice-President Dr Paolo Cinelli</p>		<p>Editor in chief Laboratory Animals (LAJ), LAL liaison Dr Paulin Jirkof</p>	
<p>Secretary Dr Andrina Zbinden</p>		<p>SGV Web site MSc Jacques Volland</p>	
<p>Treasurer Dr Philippe Bugnon</p>		<p>SGV newsletter Dr Xavier Warot</p>	

Presentation of the SGV Scientific Committee

The SGV Scientific Committee is in charge of establishing the SGV annual meeting program and organizing the meeting. It also reviews the SGV travel grants applications.

<p>Head of the Scientific Committee: Dr Isabelle Desbaillets</p>		<p>Dr Marcel Gyger</p>	
<p>Dr Corina Berset</p>		<p>Dr Maike Heimann</p>	
<p>Dr Philippe Bugnon</p>		<p>Dr Stefanie Schindler</p>	
<p>Dr Gisèle Ferrand</p>		<p>Dr Stefan Zeiter</p>	
<p>Dr Fabienne Chabaud</p>			

The SGV network



Partners of the SGV

3RCC	Swiss 3R Competence Center
EARA	European Animal Research Association
FELASA	Federation of European Laboratories Animal Associations
ICLAS	International Council for Laboratory Animal Science
LS2	Life Science Switzerland
SAFN	Swiss Animal Facilities Network
SAVIR	Swiss Association of Veterinarians in Industry and Research
SCNAT	Swiss Academy of Science
SVBT	Swiss Union for Vocational Education in Animal Care

The SGV is also in contact with the Federal Veterinary Office FSVO for all matters related to animal experimentation.

On-going initiatives related to animal experimentation in Switzerland

Overview of current and most recent Swiss initiatives:

Total ban of animal and human research in Switzerland

- Popular initiative with public decision probably end of 2021 or beginning of 2022
- The Committee for Science, Education and Culture has given the recommendation to the National Council to reject the initiative without any counter proposal

Civil rights for non-human primates

- Public initiative in Basel
- Basel constitutional court has endorsed appeal against the Basel parliament decision to declare this initiative as invalid
- Vote probably in 2021
- Will have no impact in Basel but precedence for cantons Fribourg and Zurich and abroad

Veto right for Zürich cantonal commission members

- Public initiative in Zürich
- 3 members of the cantonal animal experimentation commission can refuse license application approval that has delayed especially the Non-Human Primate research
- The initiative asks to vote for the cancellation of this veto right for a minority of the commission as Zürich is the only canton with such a right of appeal

In order to support the communication about the necessity of animal research in Switzerland, the SGV and SAVIR Board have decided to establish a flyer for our stakeholders and the interested public.

The 4-sided Flyer, available in 4 languages, German, French, Italian and English (see below) has been posted on our SGV website.



Update of the activities of the Swiss Animal Welfare Officers Network

The Swiss animal welfare officer network (AWON), well established during the past 7 years within Switzerland, met twice in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meetings have been held virtually.

During the first meeting beginning of April 2020, a new Chair and Co-Chair have been confirmed by the network members: Michaela Thallmair, Head Dept Animal Welfare and 3R at the University of Zurich will serve as Chair and Bjoern Lex, Animal Welfare Officer at Roche Pharma Research and Early Development, has been elected as Co-Chair.

The network has also decided to implement a new logo and a separate website (coming soon) from SGV in order to become more visible but will still receive financial support by SGV. In addition, the network has hired a secretary to take over all administrative tasks.

See below the new logo and the part of a flyer describing the network.



During 2020 the AWON has provided comments on the technical informations 3.01 (*proficient and animal welfare-compliant euthanasia of laboratory animals*) and 3.03 (*proficient and animal welfare-compliant anaesthesia and analgesia for laboratory animals*).

In order to foster a good collaboration and communication with the BLV (Bundesamt für Lebensmittelsicherheit und Veterinärwesen, Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office), the Chair and Co-Chair will meet twice per year with Otto Maissen, the Head of the BLV animal research group. Furthermore, the collaboration with SAFN (Swiss Animal Facilities Network) has been intensified, e.g., Chair and/or Co-Chair can attend all SAFN Executive Board meetings.

Members of the network have reviewed facts sheets on the framework of animal experimentation, 3Rs and other topics for swissuniversities. And finally, members who are interested in a discussion about potential regulations for research performed abroad have been invited for a meeting on this topic.

Birgit Ledermann

Member of the AWO network

Animal facilities in times of COVID-19 pandemic

News for the Swiss Animal Facilities Network SAFN

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SAFN Executive Board members met every week or every other week from end of March 2020 until end of May 2020, to discuss about the management of the facilities during the pandemic, the issues faced and the decisions taken or solutions implemented.

The Members of the SAFN did their utmost to maintain the safety and welfare of the facilities staff and research animals during this challenging time.

The necessary measures to react to the COVID-19 crisis led to massive reduction of research activities. This has a large impact on the animal facilities. While access was restricted for researchers, all SAFN facilities continued their necessary operations to assure animal welfare. The following measures were put in place in SAFN facilities to ensure protection of the staff and animal welfare, as well as to maintain essential core activities:

- Stop of importation of new animals, unless related to research on SARS-CoV-2;
- Reduction of breeding to the indispensable minimum;
- No initiation of new projects involving animals, unless related to research on SARS-CoV-2;
- Maintenance of selected ongoing experiments.

Decisions on specific requests were made on a case-by-case basis, considering different parameters including staff requirement, timing, complexity and comprehensive harm/benefit assessment. The overall strategy was mindful of allowing activities to pick up as swiftly as possible at the end of the COVID-19 crisis.

Regular exchanges between the SAFN, the Swiss Animal Welfare Officers Network (AWO-N) as well as the animal experimentation division of the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office additionally helped to identify and implement coordinated measures in the facilities of the Swiss universities during this crisis period.

A short statement, with the points above mentioned, was published on the SAFN web page end of March 2020.

Link for information about the SAFN:

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/research/animals-in-research>

Xavier Warot

Chair of the SAFN Executive Board

News from the Swiss Culture of Care Working Group

The term Culture of Care (CoC) is used in the laboratory animal science community to indicate a commitment to improve animal welfare, scientific quality, conditions for staff working with animals and transparency for stakeholders. Strategies to implement an effective CoC promote a mind-set and behavior that continuously and proactively works to progress and promote laboratory animal welfare and the 3Rs at a level above and beyond a culture of pure legal compliance.

To bring together different stakeholders from Switzerland and to facilitate the implementation of CoC and 3Rs methods in Switzerland, the Swiss CoC working group has been established together with the Swiss 3R Competence Centre in 2019.

The CoC working group aims to serve as an umbrella for stakeholders interested in all aspects related to CoC in Switzerland. It aims to inform about the concept, disseminate CoC resources and best practice examples and to support initiatives that are linked to CoC for example at Swiss universities, industry or societies involved or interested in animal experimentation. The CoC Working group's main goal is to introduce the CoC concept to a wider audience of diverse stakeholders in Switzerland. This will be done by the CoC subsite on the Swiss 3R Competence Centre website, the dissemination of information via a mailing list, talks, workshops and trainings for scientists, animal care takers, students and other interested groups. The group hosts meetings for interested persons to exchange best practice examples, problems encountered and to plan and implement common CoC initiatives in collaboration with the Swiss 3R Competence Centre. Until now these meetings have brought together animal housing managers, scientists, animal technicians, animal welfare officers, 3R coordinators and other experts in the field of animal care, animal welfare and 3Rs, but also organizational culture and training.

As a first step the International Animal Technician week (for the appreciation of the work of animal technicians, see picture below) has been promoted.



Animal Technician Week: 2 – 8 February 2020: This annual celebration recognizes animal technicians for their essential contribution as members of the research team. They are responsible for providing compassionate attention to the animals in their care.

A “Rodent handling” survey has been conducted to learn more about the use of standard and refined mouse handling methods in Switzerland and potential implementation barriers of gentle mouse handling techniques like tunnel or cup handling. More than 230 participants including scientists, animal technicians and veterinarians completed the survey. Approximately one fourth of them indicated to use gentle handling methods like tunnel handling and cupping for mice. Additionally, CoC and refinement workshops are in planning in collaboration with several Swiss universities.

Interested in joining the working group? Please, contact us via secretariat@swiss3rcc.org.

Links:

Swiss Culture of Care Working Group: <https://www.swiss3rcc.org/en/culture-of-care>

International Culture of Care Network: <https://norecopa.no/more-resources/culture-of-care>

Gentle rodent handling: <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/how-to-pick-up-a-mouse>

Paulin Jirkof

Chair of the 3RCC Executive Board, coordinator of the CoC Working Group

ANIMEX, the new Federal Software for management of Animal Experimentation

Since September 2020, the federal program e-Tierversuche (eTV) has been replaced by ANIMEX. Although it still shows some weaknesses, it is much more user friendly than eTV. For the time being only the modules for animal testing applications (Form A) and personnel are in place. The modules for animal facilities and C-reports, the genetically modified animal forms and forms for the animals presenting a pathological phenotype (Form M) will only be implemented in 2021.

The form A has been significantly improved and redundancies have been eliminated. It should be noted that finally one point is entirely dedicated to the 3Rs concept (point 29, Necessity). Last but not least, it is no longer up to the resource manager to send the request for authorization to the cantonal veterinary authorities, but to the Animal Welfare Officer.

Reminder: SGV offers grants!

SGV Travel Grant

To support its members for continuing education, the SGV has at its disposal a total amount of CHF 10'000. The SGV Board according to the state of the SGV finances can change this amount. Travel grants will be given to members either working in CH or coming from abroad to CH for a continuing education course or for projects related to the 3Rs. A first portion of funding of CHF 7'000 is allocated to early career members for continuous education purposes. The next portion of funding of CHF 3'000 is dedicated to members who will actively contribute to the 3Rs (i.e., a 3R course organizer, FELASA Days, etc.). If by August 1st, there is still money available from the second portion, it will automatically be transferred to the first portion. The SGV Board will discuss exceptions.

Criteria to get a grant

- Be or become a SGV member.
- Only courses with an importance in laboratory animal science (LAS), husbandry, breeding or experimentation with a gain of knowledge in the 3Rs will be acknowledged.
- Preference will be given to Ph. D - students in their final student year or to postdoctoral fellows in their initial postdoctoral years.
- Candidates will be supported only if they actively participate to the meeting by presenting a poster or an oral communication.
- One grant per person will be allocated over a period of time of 4 years: CHF 500 for CH / CHF 1'000 for / from EU and other destinations.
- One grant per research group per year. One grant per conference per year. Should another member apply for the same conference, the grant policy is based on "first-come, first-served".

- Short-Term Scientific Missions enabling young scientists to visit other laboratories, for instance to learn a new LAS technique will also be supported.
- At the end of the meeting or mission, a report will be sent to the president of the SGV scientific committee for publication in the next SGV Newsletters.

Application

Applications will be sent by email to the president of the SGV scientific committee by the laboratory principal investigator (senior scientist) at least 4 weeks before the beginning of the meeting/project/mission.

All details regarding the application and the required information can be found at <https://courses.sgv.org/funding>.

Decision bodies

- The SGV scientific committee.
- For exceptions, the president of the SGV scientific committee will transfer the application to the SGV Board.

Transfer of the grant to another person

- The grantee will provide specific information to the president of the SGV scientific committee at least 3 weeks before the meeting. The SGV scientific committee will then decide whether or not to transfer the grant.

Transfer of the grant to another meeting/course

- If the grantee wishes to transfer her/his grant to go to another course, she/he will contact the president of the SGV scientific committee.

We very much look forward to your participation
at the



SGV E-MEETING 2021

Given the uncertainty about the evolution of the sanitary situation, the Scientific Committee and the Board have decided to plan a virtual meeting in 2021.

More information to come on the SGV web site

www.sgv.org

STAY TUNED with SGV!