

Paris, 15th July 2008,

Welcome to the website of the French Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AFSTAL: Association Française des Sciences et Techniques de l'Animal de Laboratoire)

Our association was founded in 1972 and currently counts more than 500 members. It represents the professionals of the **Biomedical Research** community who contribute to medical progress and improvement of Human and Animal Health, thanks to the study of animal models. Despite all the efforts that we sustain and promote, in order to develop validated alternative methods to replace animal experiments, animal models are still necessary since it is still very often technically impossible to artificially reconstitute such systems *in vitro* or *in silico*.

The AFSTAL involves technicians, animal care takers, students, scientists, engineers, veterinarians and other personnel from the scientific, technical or regulatory fields, in order to help them improve their day-to-day practice.

In order to make sure that our work is performed to produce the **best quality** of results, while guaranteeing the **respect and welfare** we owe to animals, the missions of the AFSTAL are:

- to promote exchanges and transmission of the current and updated scientific and technical knowledge linked to laboratory animals;
- to promote the training of the French professionals of laboratory animal science following the Good Animal Practices, i.e. according to the principles and methods that particularly respect the 3R concept that was described by Russell and Burch in 1959 (rationalize the use of laboratory animals by encouraging their **R**eplacement, the **R**efinement of techniques, and the **R**eduction of the animals that need to be used).

The AFSTAL achieves its missions through **different working groups**, which organization is more precisely described on our website (www.afstal.com) which reconstruction is currently under study and will be performed before the end of the year.

We distribute information through our **website**, our quarterly Newsletter ("**AFSTAL News**") and our journal **STAL**.

The exchanges between the professionals are facilitated by the organization of events by our different working groups:

- each year, the technical commission ("commission technique" (**ComTech**)) organizes a free day-seminar on a specific subject. The next meeting will be held on the **30th of January 2009 in Paris**, and will be entitled "Donner un sens à son travail" (perception and integration, feelings and pain, smell, sight, hearing, taste, touch, social feelings, innate and acquired...)
- the veterinarian commission ("commission vétérinaire" (**ComVet**)) organizes at least one meeting each year in order to discuss the topicality of chosen subjects. The topics that have already been dealt with were for instance updates on regulation and health management procedures that professionals from our field need to regularly upgrade in their day-to-day practice. The **next ComVet meeting will be held in October** in order to discuss our current use of medicines (i.e. regulation, practical aspects).

- the training commission ("commission éducation" (**ComEd**)) works either upon request by commissions or authorities in order to make proposals on regulatory texts and guidelines for good practice, or spontaneously in order to **propose improvements in the training methods** that are currently used in France.

- for the last two years, the AFSTAL has also organized free scientific and technical workshops. The objective of these events is to bring directly on the scientific campuses of both the public and private sectors the current state of theoretical and practical knowledge on specific topics. These workshops are set in several successive French towns ("**Tour de France des ateliers de l'AFSTAL**"). The first workshop entitled "**Alimentation et Nutrition des Animaux de Laboratoire**" (i.e. "Food and Nutrition of Laboratory Animals") has already been given in Lyon, Nantes, Paris and Toulouse, and will stop again by Nice and Lille. The second workshop which topic will be the **Health Management Programs in Laboratory Animal Facilities**, will start its Tour de France in Paris, on **Tuesday 7th of October 2008**, at the Faculté de Pharmacie. Like the first ones, this workshop will then be given in several towns in France.

- in the same spirit, the AFSTAL occasionally sponsors some training events in France or in French speaking countries (e.g. training sessions for students).

The organization of the **AFSTAL annual symposium** allows us to gather for 2 days and a half, a larger number of our members, on more general topics. The 2008 edition was a success (377 participants and a total of 617 persons attended to the meeting). Besides the importance of the subject that we had chosen to discuss in depth this year ("**Good animal practices: how to share ethics during our day-to-day practice**"), the interest of the audience show how much the community that currently works on laboratory animals in France is involved in the daily setting of measures that guarantee their welfare and that also allow for the reduction of the number of animals which are still necessary to be used in Biomedical research. We are currently studying other projects that the AFSTAL could initiate, in order to continue our mission of information and training on **animal ethics**. Details on the program of next year's meeting that will be held in June 2009 will soon be available on our site.

Finally, the involvement of some of our members in different **national and international committees**, allow us to communicate objectively on our professions. Thanks to this work, the public and our political representatives receive clear and objective information on the importance of our professions regarding the improvement of Human and Animal health; they also get the reality of our day-to-day practice, which strictly follows the regulation and is performed with respect towards the animals.

On our website, you will find information on our organization, on the past and future events, and technical and scientific information that could be useful for you. We are of course at your disposal in order to provide you with all the additional information you require and to receive any of your comments. You can contact us at afstal@free.fr.

Marion Bérard, DVM, PhD
President of the AFSTAL