



One year to go: 7th World Congress on Alternatives and the Use of Animals in Life Sciences

Rome, Italy, 30 August – 3 September 2009

In about one year's time, the 7th World Conference on alternative methods will take place in Rome, Italy. Time to put this into our calendars. Herman Koeter, EFSA, Parma, Italy and Thomas Hartung, JRC, Ispra, Italy, are co-organising the event. A terrific venue was found, i.e. the Cavalieri Hilton on one of the famous hills of Rome. More economic accommodations in reach will also be available.

The conference organisers have given this Congress the motto "Calling on Science" with the intention to show how scientific progress goes today hand in hand with progress towards alternatives. The programme promises to be indeed somewhat "alternative": The three main days will present the field of alternative approaches from different angles, i.e. "Innovative technologies, concepts and approaches" on day one, "Areas of animal use" on day two and "Progress in life science domains" on day three. This means that each day sessions are grouped and specific emphasis is given in the presentations.

THEME OF DAY I

INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES, CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

The focus of this theme is on innovative technologies. It addresses broad concepts, approaches and strategies, integrating new technologies such as genomics, proteomics, metabonomics and systems biology approaches as part of product development, essential preclinical and clinical efficacy, risk assessments and product quality control thus providing new dimensions to basic research, risk assessment, quality control as well as educational aspects, allowing a sharp reduction of experimental animal use.

Although the emphasis of the theme will be on the specifics of the 'concepts', it will also address possible consequences for animal use and application in the respective life science domains, and translational aspects with potential spin-off to other areas of biomedical research.

Assessment concepts covered in separate sessions include:

1. Integrated Approaches
2. Chemical and Physical Methods
3. High-Throughput Technologies
4. Omics and Systems Biology
5. Non-Invasive Technologies
6. Non-Vertebrate Models
7. *In Silico* Models
8. Databases
9. *In Vitro* Technologies
10. Validation Concepts

THEME OF DAY II

AREAS OF ANIMAL USE

This theme focuses on the various areas of animal use, including basic research, development of pharmaceuticals, safety assessment of specific product types and biologicals including vaccines. It also covers new developments in education and training and multi-annual animal welfare action plans and large-scale testing programmes.

Although the emphasis of this theme will be on the areas of animal use, it will also address how innovative technologies, concepts and approaches as well as progress in specific life science domains could be applied in the assessment of the respective sectors.

Focus areas covered in separate sessions include:

11. Basic Research
12. Chemicals and Pesticides
13. Cosmetics
14. Pharmaceuticals
15. Food Improving Agents
16. Genetically Modified Organisms
17. Nanotechnology Applications
18. Vaccines / Biologicals
19. Education / Training
20. Animal Use Policies

THEME OF DAY III

PROGRESS IN LIFE SCIENCE DOMAINS

The theme focuses on progress in life science domains addressing basic and applied research and specific hazard endpoints, including animal welfare science and environmental science with emphasis on alternative and quantitative approaches and measurements, and progress in understanding mechanisms of action, metabolic pathways, physiology, disease models and development.

Although the emphasis of this theme will be on details of technical progress in specific life science domains, it will very much also address how the scientific progress could be applied in the areas of animal use (product-specific). It will also explore the application of specific tests in broader innovative concepts and approaches.

Life science domains covered in separate sessions include:

21. Skin and Eye Toxicity I
22. Skin and Eye Toxicity II
23. Systemic Toxicity and Target Organs
24. Genetics and Carcinogenicity
25. Reproduction, Development and Fertility
26. Disease Models
27. Environmental Science
28. Animal Welfare Science
29. Immunology
30. Neuroscience

THEME OF THE FINAL HALF DAY

SPECIAL EVENT: 50 YEARS AFTER RUSSEL & BURCH

The theme focuses on 50 years of scientific developments relevant to the 3 R's, with emphasis on the exponential progress in recent years, its implications for science, public health, and animal use and welfare. It will recognise that today we are at crossroads where major policy decisions have to be made. Global collaboration is essential and is likely to be a condition sine qua non in order to reach the ultimate 3R targets. All presentations will be constructively provocative, challenging and visionary.

Although the emphasis of this theme will be on target-oriented strategies, the event will include an Awards Ceremony bringing together in a single session all awards traditionally delivered at various sessions throughout the Congress. The event will also include a unique Special Recognition Session, details of which will not be revealed at any time prior to the session.

The Special Event will be in plenary session only and include:

- 3-4 short challenging speeches;
- Awards ceremony (all traditional WC awards);
- A special Recognition Event;
- Plenary keynote lecture: Calling on Science;
- Presentation of WC8;
- Closing speeches.

A Steering Group assists the Co-Chairs with the organisation and development of the scientific programme:

- Corrado Galli, University of Milan, Milan, Italy
- Clement Gauthier, CCAC, Montreal, Canada
- Coenraad Hendriksen, ACT and University of Utrecht, Utrecht, Netherlands
- Marcel Leist, University of Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany
- Martin Stephens, HSUS, Washington, USA

The programme of each session will be organised by one session organizer: pertinent experts in the respective areas covered by the various sessions will be invited without geographical considerations to take on this role. Currently a Programme Review Panel of approximately 50-60 experts, representing academic institutions, national ministries and oversight agencies, research groups, animal welfare organizations, industry experts and major sponsors is set up who will critically review the scientific programme at all essential stages of development and provide suggestions and comments on plenary and session speakers and on other aspects of the organisation and programme of the Congress.

The first circular on the conference will be available in September. At the same time this information and an opportunity to preregister will be made available via the website (www.aimgroup.eu/2009/wc7). Chemical, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, and plant protection industries have already announced their willingness to sponsor the congress.

Rome 2009 – 50 years after Russel and Burch, the year of the testing deadline for cosmetics in Europe and the start of REACH registrations – promises to be a key event for alternative methods. Don't miss this opportunity.