

September 2013: Report of the Introductory Course in Laboratory Animal Science at the University of Zurich by Dr. Chiara Ruzza, University of Ferrara

As winner of the 2013 “Basel Declaration Award for Education in Animal Research” I had the opportunity to attend the “Introductory Course in Laboratory Animal Science” (Zurich, 26-30 August 2013) organized by the Institute of Laboratory Animal Science of the University of Zurich. This was a 40 hours course certified by the Federation for Laboratory Animal Science Associations (FELASA, category B), including both lectures and practical training with mice and rats. The course was really well organized and it provided an exhaustive overview of all the situations and problems that people working with laboratory animals has to deal with. Objects of the course were several and included animal welfare regulation and ethical principles, standardization in husbandry, nutrition, transportation and handling, managing of transgenic mouse colony, health monitoring and pain assessment, principles of surgery and anesthesia, guidelines for euthanasia. The practical training focused on the correct handling of mouse and rats, application of substance, collection of samples, and design and execution of an experiment. During the course a large amount of interesting and useful material (i.e. papers, videos, presentations) has been provided. All the people teaching in the course was really well prepared and gave high quality lectures or practical training.

Now it is mandatory for me to me to organize a similar course in my home University (University of Ferrara, Italy). Of note this kind of education is not mandatory in Italy but now it results necessary to upgrade the level of our animal research to the higher European standards. Moreover, the needed of an adequate training and education for people conducting animal research is not only a principle of the Basel Declaration and a FELASA recommendation but it is also a requirement of the European Directive 2010/63/EU for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. The course I will organize will be addressed especially to life science PhD students and it will be opened for all researchers working with animals at our University. We are thinking to extend it also to our animal technicians. Eventually, in the future, we can try to open the course to other Italian Universities. For the first time it will be a short course (8 hours). I plan to organize it the first semester of the next year. I have already write a presentation letter of the course I propose, to the heads of PhD programs and to the professors in charge of our animal facility. They accepted this proposal positively.