

Examples of severity

Severity assessments measure the harm experienced by an animal during a procedure. A procedure can be as mild as an injection, or as severe as an organ transplant. Severity assessments reflect the peak severity of the entire procedure and are classified into five different categories:

Sub-threshold: When a procedure did not cause suffering above the threshold for regulation, i.e. it was less than the level of pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm that is caused by inserting a hypodermic needle according to good veterinary practice.

Non-recovery: When the entire procedure takes place under general anaesthetic and the animal is humanely killed before waking up.

Mild: Any pain or suffering experienced was only slight or transitory and minor so that the animal returns to its normal state within a short period of time. For example, the equivalent of an injection or having a blood sample taken.

Moderate: The procedure caused a significant and easily detectable disturbance to an animal's normal state, but this was not life threatening. For example, surgery carried out under general anaesthesia followed by painkillers during recovery.

Severe: The procedure caused a major departure from the animal's usual state of health and well-being. This would usually include long-term disease processes where assistance with normal activities such as feeding and drinking were required, or where significant deficits in behaviours/activities persist. Animals found dead are commonly classified as severe as pre-mortality suffering often cannot be assessed.