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Can veterinary care and other refinements impact on the classification of severe models?

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The application of refinements to animal models has been a key component of efforts to improve animal welfare, reduce suffering, and improve the quality of scientific data. Implementation of such refinements is also a requirement of EU Directive 2010/63 and the National legislation transposing this Directive across the EU. It might seem self-evident that use of refinements should impact on the severity classification of animal models, but this may not always be the case. The classification system detailed in the Directive and its working documents illustrates how severity should be assessed and what factors might influence this classification. A key element in this scheme is the impact of the duration, as well as the intensity, of pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. In addition, the cumulative effects of a series of procedures need to be considered. Although this seems appropriate, there is little guidance available on how cumulative effects should be assessed. There is also little information or guidance as to how positive, rather than negative events might influence severity classification. This seminar will review how the impact of veterinary care and other refinements should be considered when undertaking both prospective and retrospective reviews of severity, notably of “severe” models.