

Most Americans accept genetic engineering of animals that benefits human health: study

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Americans' views of possible uses of genetic engineering in animals vary depending on the mechanism and intended purpose of the technology, particularly the extent to which it would bring health benefits to humans, according to a new study released today by Pew Research Center.

Presented with five different scenarios of animal genetic engineering that are currently available, in development or considered possible in the future, Americans provide majority support only for the two that have clear potential to pre-empt or ameliorate human illness. Seven-in-ten Americans believe that genetically engineering mosquitoes to prevent their reproduction—thus limiting the spread of some mosquito-borne diseases—would be an appropriate use of [technology](#), and a 57% majority considers it appropriate to genetically engineer animals to grow organs or tissues that could be used for humans needing a transplant.

However, other uses of animal biotechnology are less acceptable to the public, according to the nationally representative survey of 2,537 U.S. adults conducted April 23-May 6. Those applications are the creation of more nutritious meat for human consumption (43% say this is appropriate) or restoring an extinct animal species from a closely related species (32% say this is appropriate).

And one use of [animal biotechnology](#) that is already commercially available is largely met with resistance: Just 21% of Americans consider it an appropriate use of technology to genetically engineer aquarium fish to glow, while 77% say this is taking technology too far.

Those who objected to the use of genetic engineering of animals often raised the possibility of unknown risks for animals, humans or the ecosystem. Some saw these technologies as humankind inappropriately interfering with the natural world or raised general concerns about unknown risks. For instance, when invited to explain their views, those who opposed the idea of reviving extinct species often raised concerns about unintended harm to the ecosystem.

About three-in-ten of those who said genetic engineering of mosquitoes would be taking technology too far explained that humankind would be disrupting nature (23%) or interfering with God's plan (8%). Some 24% raised concerns about the possible impact on the ecosystem.

Other findings include:

- Men tend to be more accepting of animal genetic engineering than women.
- About two-thirds of men (65%) see genetic engineering of animals to grow human organs or tissues for transplants as appropriate, compared with about half of women (49%).
- 54% of men say that using biotechnology to produce more nutritious meat is appropriate, compared with 34% of women.
- But roughly equal shares of men (72%) and women (68%) say genetic engineering of mosquitoes to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses is appropriate.

Those with high [science knowledge](#) tend to be more accepting of animal genetic engineering than those with medium or low science knowledge.

- Americans with high science knowledge (72%) are more inclined than those with medium (55%) or low (47%) science knowledge to say that genetic engineering of animals to grow human organs or tissues for transplants is appropriate.

- High-science-knowledge adults also are more inclined (47%) than those with medium (28%) or low (26%) science knowledge to say that genetic engineering of animals to revive extinct species is appropriate.

Those low in religious commitment tend to be more accepting of animal genetic engineering than those with medium or high levels of religious commitment.

- A larger share of Americans with low religious commitment (68%) than with medium (54%) or high (48%) religious commitment consider genetic engineering of animals to grow [human organs](#) or tissues for transplants to be appropriate.
- Those with low religious commitment (44%) also are more likely than those with medium (29%) or high (21%) [religious commitment](#) to consider it appropriate to genetically engineer animals to bring back [extinct species](#).

The survey also finds that the 52% of Americans who oppose the use of animals in scientific research are also more inclined to consider [genetic engineering](#) of [animals](#) as taking technology too far.

More information: To read the report click here:
[www.pewinternet.org/2018/08/16 ... y-oppose-other-uses/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/08/16...y-oppose-other-uses/)

Provided by Pew Research Center

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