



University of Wisconsin-Madison, Home of the Badgers, has a proud tradition of championing controversial issues and academic freedom, but it may be turning a blind eye to the pain and distress it causes to monkeys and other research animals on its campuses.

From 1996-1998, The University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison reported using 6,892 monkeys and 371,933 other animals in experiments and yet reported to the government that NONE of these individuals experienced any unrelieved pain and/or distress. We find this difficult to believe.

Institutions must, by law, alleviate pain AND distress in animals whenever possible. If it is not alleviated, it must be reported as such. Published reports indicate that UW research projects have used techniques that would be expected to result in significant animal pain and/or distress. The following examples are from papers co-authored by UW faculty members. Neither mentions any pain and distress relief and, indeed, providing such relief would seem to interfere with the purpose and results of each study:

- Five rhesus monkeys were infected with SIV (monkey AIDS virus). Three monkeys died during the study and two were euthanized with AIDS-associated wasting. The clinical signs associated with AIDS research in primates are chronic diarrhea, severe weight loss, anorexia, and death.

- Pregnant rhesus monkey mothers were subjected to a "model of chronic unpredictable stress." At 8 months of age, their offspring were subjected to separation from peers and other stressful conditions. Similar models of "chronic unpredictable stress" were used in other studies published by UW faculty.

UW-Madison also reported to the government in 1997 that 266 primates were kept in chair restraint for up to 194 hours. It is bad enough being strapped into a cushioned airline seat for 4 hours, let alone over 4 days.

The HSUS has made several attempts to initiate a dialogue with officials at UW-Madison (including the president of the university) about the reporting of pain and distress in animal research at UW. After 10 months of our letters and comments about the issue at several public meetings, the Chairperson of the animal care and use committee finally responded; however the letter effectively dismissed our concerns about animal distress and asserted that UW complies with the laws.

We are appealing to YOU, students, staff and faculty of the UW, who, like The HSUS, are concerned about pain and distress in animal research at your institution and the lack of up-front discussion by the university on this issue. We do not know if UW's reports that no laboratory animals experience unrelieved pain and distress are accurate or not, but we are concerned that those responsible for overseeing animal care and use may not be looking for animal distress and therefore are not seeing it when it occurs.

There have been recent studies in which human volunteers have been injured or died because of inadequate research review at major educational institutions in the US. How confident can we be that animal subject research reviews (and, more importantly, the animal subjects) do not also suffer from inadequate resources and institutional attention?

Please contact us if you would like copies of our correspondence to UW officials or if you would like to help encourage your university to behave as an academic leader and become proudly proactive in developing better approaches to assess animal pain and distress, in alleviating research animal pain and distress as much as possible, and in accurately reporting when it has not been possible to alleviate such pain and distress.

Members of the public (and scientists too) have always been particularly uneasy about research that causes pain and distress to animals. Even though such research is meant to benefit the health of humans and animals, it causes animal suffering. Scientists, and scientific institutions should be willing and eager to discuss what they are doing to address such issues and the public's concerns about them, and they should be eager to boast about their initiatives to responsible members of the animal protection community.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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