



## The Humane Society of the United States' **Animal Research News & Analysis** July 29, 2002

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### **1. Controversy Over Primate Debate Heats Up**

The issue of using nonhuman primates in biomedical research, and the controversy that surrounds it, are heating up. In April, the Institute for Laboratory Animal Research held a workshop entitled "International Perspectives: The Future of Nonhuman Primate Resources," which aimed to determine the current need for primates in research and how those needs will be met. This October, the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, Association of Primate Veterinarians and American Association of Laboratory Animal Practitioners will be holding a workshop entitled "Emerging Uses of Nonhuman Primates in Biomedical Research," which will aim to describe emerging scientific uses of primates as well as strategies regarding oversight and animal well being.

In June, the scientific journal *Nature* published an article entitled "The Great Primate Debate" which addressed a range of issues, including what types of research primates are used for, the claimed shortage of primates for research in Europe, the ethical issues surrounding such research, and increased public pressure to stop nonhuman primate research altogether.

The plight of nonhuman primates, including the debate whether great apes should be granted basic rights, has received increased media attention. Recent highlights include a segment on the Greta Van Susteren show on Fox News Channel regarding primate rights; a *Los Angeles Times Magazine* front-cover article regarding opposition to the use of chimpanzees for research; a segment on National Public Radio's *Science Friday*, featuring a debate between various stakeholders on animal rights and animal experimentation; and an article in *Discover* featuring chimpanzees who have been retired from research facilities to a sanctuary in Canada.

Public opinion polls have demonstrated that support for research on nonhuman primates, particularly great apes, has declined steadily. It is reasonable to expect that this public support

will continue to drop, which will cause the issue to move from debate towards actual action to end the use of primates in biomedical research and testing.

*Sources: Discover, May, 2002; Los Angeles Times, June 2, 2002; Nature, June 13, 2002; Institute for Laboratory Animal Research, <http://dels.nas.edu/ilar>; Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare, <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>; Fox News Channel's "On the Record" transcript, April 25, 2002; National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" transcript, May 24, 2002.*

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## **2. OECD Gives Interim Approval to Three Sets of Non-Animal Test Methods**

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an economic alliance of 30 industrialized countries, approved three sets of non-animal ("*in vitro*") test guidelines at its National Coordinators meeting in May. The OECD is expected to formally adopt these guidelines later in the year. The HSUS and the other members of the International Council for Animal Protection in OECD Programmes (ICAPO) welcome this development, as it will help to reduce the number of animals used in chemical toxicity tests. ICAPO is officially recognized by the OECD as an 'expert group' and thereby participates in key OECD meetings. The May meeting was ICAPO's first National Coordinators meeting.

The National Coordinators, who serve as the official representatives of OECD member countries, approved two *in vitro* tests for the assessment of skin corrosion: the Transcutaneous Electrical Resistance (TER) Assay and the Human Skin Model Test; one *in vitro* test guideline for skin absorption potential; and the 3T3 NRU PT test, an *in vitro* assessment for the phototoxic potential (the potential for materials to become toxic when exposed to sunlight).

"We were pleased to see these guidelines pass what many observers regard as their final technical hurdle before adoption by the OECD," said ICAPO secretary and HSUS Vice President for Animal Research Issues, Dr. Martin Stephens. "Once adopted, they will become the international standards for these forms of chemical testing."

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## **3. Reshuffling of Laboratory Animal Care Oversight in India**

A public feud between two cabinet ministers in India over the oversight of laboratory animal care has led to their dismissal by Prime Minister Atal Behari Bajpayee. Ousted were Maneka Gandhi, an animal protection leader who served as Minister of State overseeing the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, and C.P. Thakur, an animal research advocate who served as Union Health Minister. Gandhi and Thakur had feuded over who should operate a new accreditation scheme for the country's 600 animal research facilities. That job will now fall to the Department of Science and Technology. Oversight of laboratory animal care has been assigned to the Environment Minister.

*Sources: Nature, July 5, 2002; The Hindu, July 11 & 15, 2002 online editions*

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## **4. Seattle Smoke Bombs Linked to Animal Rights Activists**

July 10 – Authorities have linked smoke bombs at two office buildings in downtown Seattle to animal rights activists targeting companies that do business with Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), a contract testing firm that has animal testing facilities in the United Kingdom and New Jersey. One of the targeted Seattle buildings houses Marsh, a risk and insurance services company that works with HLS. Although the smoke bombs were determined to have been harmless, hundreds of people were evacuated from the buildings and traffic in the surrounding areas became jammed.

*Source: Seattle Post Intelligencer*

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