



The Humane Society of the United States' Animal Research News & Analysis August 27, 2003

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1. Impoverished Housing Skews Results of Animal Research

Swiss, American, and British scientists have found evidence that standard laboratory caging for rodents is no longer just a concern for animal welfare – it can also skew research results, according to a recent article in *Discover* magazine. Barren housing apparently lacks the complexity needed for normal development. Consequently, such housing adversely influences both the developing animals' health and behavior. Underlying changes in these animals' brains show the same effects as seen in some human mental disorders, while many of these animals develop permanent, abnormal, repetitive behaviors like those seen in psychiatric patients. Impoverished environments can cause major changes in animal responses to toxic chemicals used in safety testing and in the progression of disease in biomedical research. Simple additions to existing housing, such as tunnels for rodents, could create environments closer to the ones in which the animal evolved. Further research is expected to uncover species' behavioral needs with the aim of improving both the quality of research and animal welfare.

Source: Discover, July 2003

2. Pain and Distress Deficiencies Figure Prominently in AAALAC Evaluations

Inadequate attention to animal pain and distress accounts for many of the deficiencies found by the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) International during its institutional evaluations over the past three years, according to information presented at an AAALAC conference held in Reston, Virginia on May 19-20, 2003. AAALAC presented an analysis of the most common deficiencies found in key areas such as Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) functions and veterinary care. Concerning IACUCs, deficiencies in protocol review included inadequate management or

evaluation of pain or distress. Specifically, protocol reviews were deficient in the following areas: the justification for withholding analgesia, the evaluation of pain categories, the evaluation of the potential for pain and distress, and the determination of humane endpoints. Concerning veterinary care, pain and distress deficiencies related to the institution's written guidelines on anesthetics/analgesics (A/A), veterinary guidance on use of A/A, actual use of A/A, and monitoring and documentation of surgical and postoperative care. Some of these deficiencies are serious enough to jeopardize an institution's accreditation with AAALAC (a voluntary assessment and accreditation body), if not corrected promptly.

AAALAC's findings indicate that much work remains to be done in minimizing research animal pain and distress. The HSUS will continue to work with scientific experts, research institutions, oversight agencies, and funding institutions to address this problem.

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### **3. Congress Seeks Investigation of Noncompliance with Federal Standards**

Congress has asked the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to investigate recent cases of alleged noncompliance with federal policy on animal research. The recently enacted 2003 appropriations bill for the Department Health and Human Services (HHS) includes report language encouraging NIH to look into allegations of noncompliance with the Public Health Service (PHS) policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and report back to Congress. The congressional language states: "[t]he Committee is concerned about allegations that several institutions receiving NIH funding may not be in full compliance with the Public Health Service policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The Committee encourages NIH to determine the extent and scope of any such allegations and to notify the Committee of its findings." [Pg S645]

The language does not refer to specific cases of alleged noncompliance at research facilities, but these concern several institutions, including The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

*Source: Congressional Record, January 15, 2003*

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4. Vet Fired after Complaining of Animal Mistreatment in Research Lab

A laboratory animal veterinarian is suing Mount Sinai Medical Center and the University of Miami, claiming that Mount Sinai fired her after she threatened to notify federal regulators of repeated neglect and mishandling of research animals. Veterinarian Lisa Singer's lawsuit cites several examples of the alleged mistreatment: mice were so crowded in cages that one scratched half its face off on the bars; a sheep left unattended on a breathing machine died after the machine malfunctioned and left her unable to exhale; another sheep had a catheter inserted improperly, leaving her incapable of urinating and in pain; and yet another sheep was found dead after having its neck caught in the bars of its cage. Dr. Singer alleges that she began being harassed by other employees after she started speaking out about these problems.

Spokespersons for the Miami, Florida-based facilities claim that mishaps in the lab are rare occurrences, that Singer voluntarily left Mount Sinai, and that alleged harassment by other employees stemmed from Singer's "harsh personality." A former co-worker has stated that the animal mistreatment continued well after Singer left. Ed Kashuba stated, "You don't have to

have a degree to know if you're working with an animal on a daily basis that the animal is in distress."

Source: *Sun-Sentinel*, July 2003 (www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/broward/sfl-animals20jul21.story)

5. Calls for Dialogue on Animal Experimentation Issues

Two articles in a recent issue of the *Endocrine Society News* explore the possibility of dialogue between biomedical researchers and animal protectionists over the contentious issue of animal experimentation. An essay by Drs. Andrew Rowan and Martin Stephens, both of The Humane Society of the United States, discusses the polarization of views on animal research, the common ground among researchers and animal protectionists, and the history of dialogue efforts in the United States and abroad. They make the case for a rekindling of dialogue efforts in the United States, offering the minimization of research animal pain and distress as a potential focus of joint activity. In a preface accompanying this essay, Dr. Paul Komerassoff, Chair of The Endocrine Society's Ethics Advisory Committee, adds his views on dialogue. He writes that "in the case of animal experimentation, there is a need for greater openness and fresh attempts at communication." Komerassoff notes the difficulty and risk of attempted dialogue, but urges The Endocrine Society and its members (and, by extension, the broader scientific community) to reflect and debate the relevant issues.

Source: *Endocrine Society News*, February 2003 (<http://www.endo-society.org/pubrelations/news.cfm>)

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