

Information Sheet - Articles (English Lesson)

ARTICLE 1

Animal Experiments

Each year inside British laboratories, approximately 3 million animals are experimented on. Every 12 seconds, one animal dies. Cats, dogs, rats, mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, primates (monkeys) and other animals are used to test new products, to study human disease and in the development of new drugs - they are even used in warfare experiments.

Animal Aid opposes animal experiments on both moral and scientific grounds. Animals are not laboratory tools. They are sentient creatures capable of experiencing pain, fear, loneliness, frustration and sadness.

To imprison animals and deny them their freedom and ability to express natural instincts, to deliberately inflict pain, cause extreme suffering, mental distress, and ultimately a premature and often slow and protracted death all in the name of science is unacceptable. All the more so because the experiments are bad science in the first place: they do not work and have the potential to harm human health. Ending vivisection will benefit people as well as animals.

In January 2004 a landmark victory was won in the campaign against animal experiments. Cambridge University, which had for several years been planning to build a multi-million pound primate research centre, announced it was shelving the plans, following a public inquiry at which it was unable to back up its claims that the research to be carried out there would benefit human health. Hundreds of monkeys each year will now be spared the horror of confinement, torture and death inside a laboratory. Animal Aid is actively campaigning against a new animal laboratory under construction at Oxford University.

Every year, Animal Aid's Mad Science Awards highlight the ludicrous and horrific scientific research carried out on animals. The 2004 awards went to researchers at Oxford and Cambridge conducting experiments on monkeys.

ARTICLE 2

Police arrest five over medical research farm

LONDON (Reuters) - Police arrested five people on Tuesday as part of their probe into a long and violent campaign against owners of a farm which bred guinea pigs for medical research.

The Hall family at Darley Oaks Farm in Staffordshire endured abuse, death threats and, in the worst incident of a six-year campaign, a family grave was desecrated. In August, the family said the business would return to traditional farming, a decision they hoped would lead to the return of the body of Gladys Hammond, the mother-in-law of one of the co-owners.

On Tuesday, Staffordshire detectives raided four addresses arresting a 35-year-old man in Manchester, a 36-year-old man in Birmingham, a 38-year-old man in Wolverhampton and a 37-year-old woman in Burntwood, Staffordshire.

The men were arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to blackmail David Hall and Partners. Detectives said they had also arrested a woman, 23, in Wolverhampton on suspicion of obstructing police and assaulting an officer.

The grave of Hammond, who died eight years ago aged 82, was dug up and her remains taken away in October 2004.

No group has claimed responsibility for the action, the culmination of one of the most sustained harassment campaigns by animal rights activists in Britain.

ARTICLE 3

Julia Stephenson: The Green Goddess A victory for good sense - and guinea pigs

I cheered when I heard that Darley Oaks guinea pig farm is to close. As usual this rare victory for the animal rights lobby caused a storm of protest and the usual band of scientists and doctors, many financed by pharmaceutical companies, were wheeled out to give their one-sided view. Predictably, the focus was on a minority of violent protesters and avoided the real issue: that animal tests offer misleading results and cause suffering for both people and animals.

Many doctors and scientists are growing increasingly concerned about the efficacy of animal experiments. Thousands of them have joined Europeans for Medical Progress, an independent body who oppose animal experimentation solely because it harms people. Its director, Kathy Archibald, admits that those who speak out risk ostracism from the medical establishment, but they feel compelled to fight for the truth. Testing on animals slows down medical progress because it tells us about animals, not people. Animals are biologically and physiologically different to humans and react differently to many substances. It's no surprise that prescription drugs tested on animals are the fourth leading cause of death in the Western world. The question is, why do animal experiments continue if they are so inaccurate and given that there are more efficient alternatives such as human DNA chips, human tissues, computer programmes that predict human metabolism, and micro-dose studies that reveal the fate of drugs in the human body?

The tradition of animal experiments is so deeply ingrained that the whole medical system is based on it. Researchers attract grants based on how many papers they publish. It's much easier to publish papers using animals than by doing human-based research. Animal breeders, cage and equipment manufacturers and the pharmaceutical industry are multi-billion pound industries. Animal tests help them speed new drugs to market and give them liability protection when their drugs kill or injure.

However, the tide is turning. We recently witnessed the biggest drug disaster in history when the arthritis drug Vioxx was withdrawn after causing heart attacks. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, American doctors who campaign against animal testing, are suing Merck for promoting an unsafe drug on the strength of test results in monkeys.

This was reported on the same day as the one-sided reports about Darley Oaks closing. No one made the link between Vioxx - extensively animal-tested yet lethal to humans - and the guinea pig farm, but if they had they would have cheered. Guinea pigs are used in medical research for skin irritation testing. Their fur is shaved and medication applied, without anaesthetic, causing agony. But due to a difference in the distribution of blood vessels, their skin reacts differently to ours, rendering most experiments useless. Yet the media avoid these arguments and exaggerate the extremist angle.

In reality, most animal rights protesters are law abiding. However peaceful old ladies don't make waves, and in frustration a minority of extremists take violent action, which acts as propaganda to the vivisectionists.

ARTICLE 4

Medical Milestones

Animal research has played an important role in most major medical advances of the last century. We have probably all benefited from vaccines and antibiotics to prevent and treat infections and anaesthetics used in all forms of surgery. Medicines can now overcome serious conditions such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure.

Research in the last few decades has also begun to answer some of the more difficult medical problems such as cancer, heart disease and depression, and newly emerged infections such as HIV. In addition to the medical benefits, we should not forget that every advance in veterinary medicine is, by definition, the result of animal research.

Medical science has developed a wide range of non-animal experimental techniques which can provide answers to scientific questions that animal studies simply could not address. Despite these scientific advances, a review of some current medical research shows that many key questions in medical science can still only be answered by studies on animals. These studies offer hope to millions who suffer from serious conditions such as cystic fibrosis, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, spinal cord damage and third world infections like malaria.

Alternatives

What is an alternative?

By any common-sense definition, the word 'alternative' suggests a choice between two or more options. In the case of animal experiments there is no choice. If a non-animal (in vitro) method is developed to replace animals, then it must be used.

Advances in science and technology can lead to techniques that can replace animals. However, different research methods are generally complementary rather than alternatives.

Few in vitro techniques at present can directly replace the use of animals.