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Backgrounder on animal research and teaching at UC Davis

Why use animals?

UC Davis is one of the largest and most prestigious biological research facilities in the United States. With a College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Schools of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, the California National Primate Research Center, a mouse biology program and a large number of academic departments, Davis has a very strong and diverse team of research scientists.

Research on animals benefits animals, people and the environment. Some diseases are unique to one species and cannot be studied otherwise. Thorough training of veterinary students benefits their future animal patients. Animals provide valuable models for studies ranging from the impact of environmental pollution to treatment of diseases and physical ailments.

The UC Center for Animal Alternatives, established by the California Legislature in 1991 and located at UC Davis, has helped to reduce the number of animals used in teaching and research. It encourages the development and use of animal models, computer programs and other animal alternatives. Anyone conducting research or using animals for teaching at UC Davis must first document there are no viable alternatives to the use of animals for the objective of their research or teaching, or if alternatives, why the alternatives are not adequate.

How many and what kind?

The most numerous animals housed at UC Davis for research or teaching purposes are mice and fish. In 2007, on any given day, an average of 21,400 mice and 76,000 fish were housed on campus. Many of the fish are larvae (the size of a guppy or smaller), used for example in environmental research.

The totals of animals kept on campus include breeding colonies, as well as farm animals such as cattle, pigs, sheep and chickens housed for research and teaching purposes. The campus's annual report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture also includes wild animals such as elephants, foxes and seals studied in their native environment.

Approximately 5,000 non-human primates are housed at the California National Primate Research Center. They represent less than two percent of the total animal use at UC Davis. The center, one of only eight NIH-funded primate research centers in the nation, houses mainly

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Rhesus macaques with smaller numbers of other monkeys. There are no chimpanzees, gorillas or other apes at the center. Many of the monkeys live here for decades in social groups in half-acre outdoor corals.

In 2007, 745 dogs and 1,038 cats were used or housed for research or teaching. Some of these animals were in the spay/neuter training program, which is run in association with local animal shelters and provides valuable training for veterinary students. Adoptable animals are brought to UC Davis and neutered under anesthesia by veterinary students supervised by specialists. The animals are returned to the shelters for adoption. In 2007, this accounts for 159 of the dogs used in teaching at UC Davis.

The remaining animals are used for studies aimed at the improvement of dog and cat health and of human health, for example studies involving pet nutrition, genetic diseases, asthma and vaccine trials. Many of these animals are then included in the spay/neuter program, so that they are eligible for adoption.

Oversight and regulations

The campus Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must approve each animal research and teaching project before it can begin. This review process is mandated by federal law and to maintain compliance with the Public Health Service (NIH) guidelines on humane care and use of laboratory animals. The committee must verify that the living conditions of the animals are appropriate for the species, that the use of pain-relieving drugs is adequate, and that the numbers of animals are the minimum necessary to complete the project.

Animal welfare inspectors from the U.S. Department of Agriculture regularly make routine unannounced inspections of the campus, also as required by federal law. Campus facilities are also inspected and accredited by the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, AAALAC.

Studies at the California National Primate Research Center must pass three levels of review in order to be conducted. The Center's own research advisory committee reviews the proposed project to make certain that it is feasible, that the techniques are appropriate, and that the study justifies the use of the Center's primates (most of which are bred on the premises). If approved by the Primate Center's committee, the project must be reviewed and approved by the campus Animal Care and Use Committee. Additionally, the proposed research is reviewed at the National Institutes of Health (or other funding agency).

History of UC Davis animal activism

An arson fire at UC Davis in April 1987 caused \$5 million in damage to the campus's John E. Thurman Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Although the letters ALF (Animal Liberation Front) were found painted inside that burned laboratory, no one was ever prosecuted for the fire, due to the lack of evidence. The building was eventually completed and now provides diagnostic services and information to help control animal diseases.

The ALF also claimed responsibility for a March 18, 1997, arson fire at the site of the partially

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constructed Center for Comparative Medicine, west of the main Davis campus. Opened in June 1998, the \$10.3 million center brings together researchers in veterinary and human medicine to study viral diseases such as HIV/AIDS, herpes, and measles, as well as leukemia and other types of cancer.

On April 20, 1997, 32 animal rights activists were arrested during a four-hour protest that ended at the California National Primate Research Center west of the main campus. They were charged with a range of violations: trespassing, resisting arrest, vandalism and wearing a mask during the commission of a crime.

On June 12, 1999, six animal rights activists participating in the Primate Freedom Tour protest were arrested at the California National Primate Research Center. Charges included blocking a roadway; unlawful assembly; resisting, obstructing or delaying a police officer; and violating a court order to stay off UC Davis property.

On October 25, 1999, animal rights activists claimed responsibility for having mailed envelopes containing razor blades to several faculty members whose research involves non-human primates. This was a nationwide activity by the activists and many universities received the booby-trapped envelopes.

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Other potential information sources:

California Biomedical Research Association:

<http://www.ca-biomed.org/>

Foundation for Biomedical Research:

<http://www.fbresearch.org/>