Research Community Outreach

The comprehensive report Recognition and Alleviation of Pain and Distress in Animal Research: Concepts, Measurement, and Practical Implications addresses key pain and distress issues, including definitions of terms and the recognition, quantification, and alleviation of pain and distress. The HSUS seeks to make this book an indispensable resource on laboratory animal pain and distress for the research community.

The HSUS also distributes technical and policy information on animal pain and distress through our Pain & Distress Report quarterly newsletter, which is sent to more than 3,000 members of the animal research community nationwide.

The HSUS creates and distributes technical writings detailing practical ways to reduce animal pain and distress during commonly used research methods such as carbon dioxide euthanasia and polyclonal antibody production. We urge regulatory agencies to adopt these recommendations.

The HSUS also analyzes research institutions’ reporting of unrelieved animal pain and distress to the USDA to determine patterns and highlight areas needing immediate attention in regards to development and implementation of alternatives.

Improvements in housing as well as in research procedures can reduce stress levels and enhance scientific data.

If animals are forced to give their lives for research, the least we can do is make their existence as free of pain and distress as possible.

Improvements in Regulation and Oversight

The HSUS works to improve animal research legislation through congressional action, such as increasing penalties for AWA violations, especially those that directly affect animal welfare. The HSUS also urges regulatory and oversight agencies to strengthen their existing regulations and enforcement. For example, we are pressing the USDA to modify its current pain and distress classification system, which has significant deficiencies.

We are backing a new classification system, developed by representatives from academia and animal protection, that accurately reflects the amount of animal pain and distress, whether or not pain-relieving drugs are used. This information could be used to monitor pain and distress trends within the United States and to compare trends between countries. Those areas involving the most severe pain and distress could also become the focus of development of much-needed alternatives to animal research and testing.

You Can Help

To learn more about the Pain & Distress Campaign and how you can help eliminate suffering in laboratory animals, visit humanesociety.org/pain_distress.

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Improving Animal Welfare—and Science

The controversy over animal experimentation is fueled substantially by public concern for animal suffering. This public concern has been the driving force behind the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the federal law intended to limit and document laboratory animal pain and distress. Although this law and other mandates have led to improvements in animal welfare, suffering of laboratory animals remains widespread. More than 25 million animals are used in research every year in the United States, with many more bred for potential use but euthanized. Research areas involving significant pain and distress include the study of depression, anxiety, drug addiction, infectious disease, toxicity, and trauma. Many commonly used techniques also cause animal pain and distress, such as certain euthanasia procedures, restraint, food and water deprivation, forced oral dosing of liquids, and multiple surgeries. Guinea pigs are the most common AWA-covered animals used in studies that cause unrelieved pain and distress according to the most recent data available (2004).1

Current Challenges

A number of factors limit the welfare of animals used in research and testing:

• Even the modest protection afforded by the AWA does not extend to the tens of millions of mice and rats bred and used for research annually.
• The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—the federal agency that enforces the AWA—does a poor job of tracking trends in research animal suffering, and research facilities do a poor job of reporting such suffering to the USDA and the public.
• The AWA regulations do not define distress, which limits the USDA’s effectiveness in providing oversight and guidance on this topic to research facilities.
• Technical guidance on recognition and alleviation of pain and distress is seriously lacking.

The HSUS is also committed to eliminating pain and distress that research animals suffer as a result of transportation, housing conditions, and improper handling. Eliminating such suffering is essential for animal welfare as well as improved science.

The HSUS Pain & Distress Campaign is committed to eliminating significant pain and distress in animal research.

Pain & Distress Campaign Components

The Pain & Distress Campaign uses the following main strategies to reach our goal of eliminating significant pain and distress in animal research.

Public Outreach

Public support for animal research has declined in recent years, perhaps due to increasing awareness of the suffering involved and the lack of effort by the research community to prevent or alleviate it.2 An independent poll conducted in 2001 clearly indicates that the degree of animal suffering influences public opinion (Table 1).

Table 1 Public Opinion on Animal Research in Relation to Amount of Pain and Distress Caused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Who Disapprove</th>
<th>Little or No Pain and Distress</th>
<th>Moderate Pain and Distress</th>
<th>Severe Pain and Distress</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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Results of an independent poll of 757 Americans conducted for The HSUS in 2001.

The researcher’s perception of pain.

Research has shown that public support for animal research decreases when the animals are subjected to pain, illness, surgery, or death.

The HSUS educates and mobilizes the public to support efforts that will improve the welfare of animals in laboratories. For example, The HSUS encourages college and university students, parents, and alumni to hold their schools accountable for eliminating animal suffering, pain, and distress caused by research that is paid for with their tuition and tax dollars.

The HSUS Pain & Distress Campaign seeks to focus attention on recognizing, alleviating, and preventing the pain and distress experienced by the millions of animals used in biomedical research and testing.

1Laboratory-bred mice and rats are used most frequently in studies causing unrelieved pain and distress; however, they are not covered by the AWA and no formal statistics are available on their use in the United States. In countries where mice and rat statistics are reported, their usage in studies causing unrelieved pain and distress by far outnumbers that of all other species. Excluding mice and rats, the most commonly used species in studies causing unrelieved pain and distress in other countries are rabbits in Switzerland (2005) and guinea pigs in the Netherlands (2000), Canada (2004), and New Zealand (2005).