



The ACC Connection

Volume 3, no. 1, JAN / FEB 2007

WELCOME to the sixth edition of the *ACC Connection*, a previously quarterly newsletter now to be published bi-monthly, designed to help researchers with questions regarding animal research at the University of Connecticut Health Center. Our sixth issue is designed to familiarize animal users with some of the animal rights activist groups in the United States and how to deal with them.

It is important to realize the distinction between animal welfare organizations (such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and animal activist organizations (such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). Animal welfare organizations seek to ensure that animals are treated and used in a humane manner. Animal rights organizations are looking to force individuals and businesses into thinking their way by any means necessary. It is also important to realize that by mandating research programs involving animals, the Congress of the United States, speaking on behalf of the people, has taken a firm stand against the animal rights advocates who would prohibit all use of animals for research purposes. Furthermore, by refusing to incorporate animal rights language in any federal legislation, the Congress has withheld public approval for the animal rights philosophy.

This list is not exhaustive, just organizations that have some connection to the Health Center (by correspondence, association with a UConn organization, or affiliated with an organization that has contacted the Health Center).

Animal Rights Organizations

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PeTA)

PeTA was founded in 1980 and “dedicated to establishing and protecting the rights of all animals”. It focuses its attention on 4 areas in which the “largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensity for the longest periods of time”. These areas include: factory farms, laboratories, clothing trade, and the entertainment industry.

PeTA states that they work through public education, cruelty investigations, research, animal rescue, legislation, special events, celebrity involvement, and protest campaigns. This information is on their website (<http://www.peta.org>). Their assets in 2000 exceeded \$125 million dollars.

It appears that PeTA condones violence against those who do not believe the way they do. Ingrid Newkirk, president and co-founder (along with Alex Pacheco) of the organization, frequently voices that she personally supports the illegal activities of the activist group SHAC (see below) and PeTA has been linked to monetary contributions to that organization. She is also an avid supporter of the terrorist group ALF (see below) and PeTA has also been linked to monetary contributions to that organization. She has been accused in court documents of participation in the ALF arson of a Michigan State University research laboratory. Some of her more famous quotes include “There’s no rational basis for saying that a human being has special rights. A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy. They’re all animals”; “Our nonviolent tactics are not as effective. We ask nicely for years and get nothing. Someone makes a threat, and it works”; “Probably everything we do is a publicity stunt... we are not here to gather members, to please, to placate, to make friends. We’re here to hold the radical line”; and “I find it a small wonder that the laboratories aren’t all burning to the ground. If I had more guts, I’d light a match”.

PeTA has handled the press for ALF, hires convicted ALF militants, and apparently funds their legal defense. By 2003, PeTA activists started using SHAC-like tactics- stalking and harassing fast-food restaurant executives and buying stock in companies they wish to close. PETA spends <1% of its budget actually helping animals. PeTA euthanizes over 85% of the animals it receives.

Animal Liberation Front (ALF)

The ALF has its roots in 1960s England. At this time, a small group of people began sabotaging hunts there. ALF was officially established in 1976. The ALF website states that their members “act directly to stop animal suffering, at the risk of losing their own freedom”. Direct action refers to illegal actions performed to bring about animal liberation. There is no office, no leaders, no newsletter, and no official membership. Anyone who carries out direct action according to ALF guidelines is a member of the ALF. Their website gives detailed instructions on how to carry out these direct actions.

The FBI has labeled ALF and its sister organization, Earth Liberation Front or ELF, as terrorist groups. ALF and ELF together have been called the nation’s “most serious domestic terrorism threat”. The two groups are responsible for more than 600 crimes since 1996 and causing at least \$43 million dollars in damage.

Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC)

SHAC is the second organization on our list designated by the FBI to be a terrorist group. The group was formed in November of 1999 with the aim of closing down Europe’s largest animal testing lab: Huntingdon Life Sciences. Their website states “We strongly believe that you are either with us or against us.”

SHAC is a believer in economic sabotage- targeting not only the animal users, but also individuals who are associated with companies that have business with the animal users. By 2001 it was noted that, through SHAC dealings, Huntingdon Life Sciences company’s share price was in control of animal activists. Though their website states that they do not encourage or incite illegal activities, they have been linked to numerous criminal activities including arson. On March 2, 2006 a federal jury in Trenton, NJ, convicted SHAC USA and six of its members of using their website to incite violence against individuals affiliated with the contract research firm Huntingdon Life Sciences. This was the first case to be tried under the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act which was enacted in 1992 and expanded in 2002.

Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

Contrary to what their name implies, HSUS is not a government-sponsored organization. It was founded in 1954 as an animal welfare organization to “promote the protection of all animals”. They claim to be the nation’s largest and most powerful animal protection organization. Their major campaigns are in the following areas: factory farming, animal fighting, fur trade, and inhumane sport hunting practices. Since 1954 they have moved in direction from animal welfare organization to animal rights organization.

The HSUS aims to completely end the use and ownership of animals. In 1980, at a national conference, it was formally resolved that HSUS would “pursue on all fronts... the clear articulation and establishment of the rights of all animals... within the full range of American life and culture.” Members of HSUS management (e.g., John Goodwin) have been ALF members with lengthy arrest records and the promotion of arson to accomplish animal liberation even though HSUS has a corporate policy of not endorsing violence as a protest tactic. Other management personnel are known to be financial supporters of ALF and the violence that they do. HSUS has made financial contributions toward “WASTE.org” which was an internet website and the main distribution point for communications of ALF.

Though the assets of the HSUS are over \$125 million dollars, they gave less than \$150,000 dollars to hands-on humane societies and animal shelters. Despite HSUS’ public claims that it wants to ensure that animals are treated humanely, the organization’s values are geared toward eliminating humans’ use of animals entirely. HSUS leaders have expressed the desire to put an end the use of animals in biomedical research; in 1986, then-VP John McArdle expressed the opinion that brain-dead humans should be substituted for animals in medical research. He then instructed HSUS members to “avoid the words ‘animal rights’- they are too strange for the public. Never appear to be opposed to animal research. Claim that your only concern is the source of animals”.

University of Connecticut Animal Rights Collective (UConn ARC)

Since the Health Center is affiliated with UConn, it seems appropriate to mention the local animal rights group here at our University. Justin Goodman, a graduate student at UConn, is the group’s president. It is a student run, university sanctioned organization. Their website is limited, but it seems that the group’s focus is on the use of nonhuman primates. In March, 2006, Mr. Goodman received the “Outstanding Activist Award” from peta2 (PeTA’s youth division) for his actions. Both websites (UConn and PeTA) state that he has “worked tirelessly to save monkeys”. PeTA is behind their efforts “100%” along with HSUS. The site asks for help to be given to 7 SHAC members convicted of animal terrorist activities and links to that website. Given these other organizations’ potential penchant for violence, actions from the UConn ARC should be closely watched.

The Health Center and Animal Rights Activists

The Health Center's basic approach to dealing with animal rights activists is to establish and maintain an environment of caution. The Health Center believes it is important to support its researchers and the animal work that is performed at the Health Center and will continue to do so. At the same time, the Health Center management team acknowledges the right of activists to demonstrate at the Health Center within legal confines. They realize that the topic of animal research is a social issue and in the public consciousness.

Jim Walter, AVP of Communications, feels that there are two important points all employees should follow: (1) be especially cautious whenever someone you don't know contacts you for information regarding the use of animals in research, and (2) researchers should not field questions from unknown persons regarding their work, the laboratory's work with animals, or other information themselves. These inquiries should be referred to the Associate VP of Research Administration.

If animal rights activists are demonstrating on the Health Center campus, they are obligated to do so in a legal manner. They cannot disrupt the workflow of the Health Center nor harass its employees or visitors to the campus. If there is any news media involvement, employees of the Health Center have the right to address these individuals, if they choose to, and express their personnel views. However, it would be clear that in no way would these remarks represent the position of the Health Center. All official announcements representing the position of the Health Center are the responsibility of the Office of Communications. News media representatives are not allowed into any Health Center building unless authorized and accompanied by Office of Communications personnel.

To date, all actions used by activists at the Health Center have been legal. If this were to change, the Health Center would vigorously pursue criminal charges against any person or organization responsible for any illegal activities.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a statute designed to protect democracy and is taken very seriously by those agencies charged with overseeing it. A FOIA request regarding the use of laboratory animals received by Health Center personnel should be directed to Dr. Scott Wetstone, Director, Health Center Administration. This is very important because, once the Health Center receives a request for information (and the requestor does not have to use the words "Freedom of Information Act" for it to be a FOIA request), UCHC has 4 days to send an acknowledgement of receipt to the requestor; therefore, faster action is better than delayed or no action. The Health Center is also charged with providing the information to the requestor in a reasonable time frame.

Information subject to FOIA does not have to be a written (hard copy) document to be subject to disclosure; it can include electronic data as well as email. As with many things, certain data are exempt from the FOI act. Research data while they are being compiled and preliminary notes and drafts are exempt from FOIA. Under the act, the Health Center is required to provide official records to the requestor.

The take-home message with regard to FOIA is do not respond- in any way- to the person who has made the request. Forward the request to Dr. Wetstone. If you absolutely must respond, simply say that you sent the request on to the appropriate individual at the Health Center. Do not ignore requests for information- pass them along to where they need to go. More harm than good comes from ignoring or delaying these requests.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if I receive a phone call or email in my laboratory from an animal rights activist?

All personnel should realize that phone calls or emails from unknown persons may be from an animal rights activists seeking to gain information about the activities at the Health Center. Since activists have been known to use lies and deceit in attempts to gain information, all phone calls and emails, however innocent they may seem, should be treated with caution. Never give any information about work being performed in the laboratory to unknown individuals. Refer all callers or writers to the Associate VP of Administration or Dr. Wetstone. This includes both internal and external calls and emails from unknown individuals.

Is the Health Center obligated to give activists information regarding my research?

Under specific circumstances, the Health Center is obligated to give activists information involving research being performed. Research data, while it is being worked on, is exempt from FOIA; proprietary information (e.g., innovative science described in documents) is exempt from FOIA as are preliminary notes and drafts. Preliminary results from

investigations are also exempt from FOIA. However, documents such as funded grant applications- which may contain such information- are generally subject to FOIA disclosure.

What if the media calls and wants a statement regarding animal research?

Refer all media calls to Jim Walter, AVP of Communications. All requests for media interviews must be coordinated through this office.

If you have questions you'd like to see answered in future issues, please send them to pohl@uchc.edu and we will do our best to answer as many questions as possible.

Upcoming Training, January 2007 – February 2007

New Animal Users Initial Basic Core Training

Monday, January 22	9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Building 20 conference room
Monday, February 19	9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Building 20 conference room

New Institutional, State, or Federal Regulations

Institutional

ACC Policy	10/26/06	Policy on Use of Tribromoethanol Revised. To view policy, go to: http://clacc.uchc.edu/ACC/Policies/Tribromoethanol.htm
------------	----------	---

State

None

Federal

Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act	Passed both the House and Senate as of 11/13/06, now being sent to the Executive Office
---------------------------------	---



Next Issue: Carbon Dioxide Euthanasia Challenges

CONTACTS

ACC Coordinator / Research Compliance Monitor	Alison D. Pohl, MS, MT, rLATg	x4129
ACC Administrative Assistant	Tiffany Jespersen, ALAT	x4397
ACC Chair	Joseph Lorenzo, MD	x8199
CLAC Director	Peter Autenried, DVM, Ph.D.	x2248
Associate VP for Health Administration	Leonard Paplauskas	x3173
Animal Facility Supervisor	Sara Fraize, rLAT	x4075
Biological Safety Officer	Ronald G. Wallace, Ph.D., CIH	x3781
Associate VP for Communications	Jim Walter	x4710
UCHC Administration Director	Scott Wetstone, MD	x4440