

## **Animal rights v animal welfare / Seriously Ill for Medical Research.**

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Seriously Ill for Medical Research (Organization)

### **Publication/Creation**

Houghton Regis : Seriously Ill for Medical Research, [1992?]

### **Persistent URL**

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experiments. This is entirely reasonable if approached responsibly and has the full support of the medical research community.

Doctors and scientists care as much, if not more, about animals as anyone else. Their assistants who look after the laboratory animals do this work because they are animal lovers. They also have the experience and training to be able to see signs of distress or illness in an animal. It is important that the animals used in research (which are mostly mice and rats) are well looked after and healthy, as scientific results could be affected by stress or infection.

### Animal experiments and the law

The welfare of laboratory animals is also protected by the law. In this country, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 lays down strict controls on animal experiments. This makes sure the animals are well looked after and used in the smallest possible numbers. Organisations and scientists must be licensed before any animal experiments can be carried out, and all projects are closely examined by government experts to make sure they are worthwhile. The law does not allow experiments on animals if the results could be obtained any other way.

### The wolf in sheep's clothing

It is often difficult to tell whether groups campaigning for animals are genuine animal welfare groups or animal rights groups pretending to be concerned about animal welfare. Some animal rights groups try to present a very respectable image and have welfare-type names, such as Animal Aid. This leaflet will have given you some clues, but if you are still unsure about a particular organisation, please contact the SIMR office.

This leaflet is produced by Seriously Ill for Medical Research (SIMR), which is an independent, voluntary organisation of sufferers and their friends formed to promote research into serious and fatal diseases and to support the humane use of animals in medical research.

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INFORMATION CENTRE

28 MAY 1992

Wellcome Centre for Medical Science

## Animal Rights v Animal Welfare

The people who campaign loudly and sometimes violently against animal experiments would like you to believe that they care about animal welfare. Some of them might, but the people who pull the strings and most of the activists believe in animal rights, which is quite different.

### What are animal rights?



What does animal rights mean? It has little to do with animal welfare. Believing in animal rights means that you believe that animals have the same rights as people: as a leading activist says, "a pig is a dog is a rat is a boy." So those who believe in animal rights think it is immoral to eat meat or fish, to wear wool or leather, or to kill a disease-carrying rat or mosquito. They believe that to kill any animal, for whatever reason, and however humanely, is murder.

The animal rightists also claim they would not take any medical treatments developed or tested on animals, although most of them probably have done. Have they never taken pain killers, antibiotics, vaccines? Some of them probably agonise about keeping pets, as the hard-liners see this as a form of slavery. But those who do keep pets try to feed them on unnatural vegetarian food. They must also avoid veterinary medicines and vaccines (developed, as you might expect, through animal experiments) for common ailments such as canine distemper and feline flu.

## Animal rights and medical research

The form of animal use that appears to be most hated by the animal rights movement is medical research using animals. There are two large, wealthy, national animal rights organisations - the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection and the National Anti Vivisection Society - and hundreds of smaller national and local groups, committed to complete abolition of animal experimentation.

Even the apparently "respectable" animal rights groups resort to lies and distortions to mislead the public. So it is relatively easy to paint a totally distorted picture of cruel scientists torturing animals for no reason in secret laboratories.

The propaganda machine of the animal rights movement relies on shock tactics. Nasty pictures are often used, but they do not tell you where they come from. Some are probably rigged, many come from abroad and they may be as much as 50 years old. Add some sensational language and the claim that such research is useless, and you have all the ingredients of a shock horror story. This is how they gain the popular vote from those who are genuinely concerned about animal welfare.

Some extreme animal rights activists take the law into their own hands. They harass and attack individual doctors, vets and medical researchers, and even threaten their children. They break laboratory windows, steal research animals and plant bombs. If medical scientists appear to be secretive about their work, it is because the activities of these extremists have forced them into silence. Medical researchers have seen colleagues and their families living under siege conditions because they have dared to talk about their research which happens to involve the use of animals. This research may one day save many human lives or prevent a great deal of suffering, but that does not seem to matter to the animal rights extremists.

## Where does the money come from?

Money donated to animal rights groups - estimated at about £3 million in the UK alone - does not contribute anything to animal welfare. It merely funds the production of more distorted material and misinformation campaigns. It pays the salaries of full time propagandists and the

costs of running large offices. Money given to animal rights groups, which are not charities, is money taken away from genuine animal welfare charities or charities concerned with human health and welfare.

## So who suffers?

The final losers are ordinary patients, both human and animal. Money that could be spent on life-saving research is instead diverted into increased laboratory security, repair of damage, replacement of expensive stolen animals. The animal rights movement argues that animal research is about big profits and high salaries, but much of the basic

research is carried out in universities which are already starved of cash. Medical research will not be able to attract good scientists if low salaries are accompanied by harassment and fear of attack.

Animal rights also harms animals, by denying the veterinary benefits of animal experiments. And animals 'liberated' from the protected environment of research laboratories are not equipped to survive in the wild and suffer painful deaths from disease, starvation and predators.



"THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING"

## Animal welfare

Most people are rightly concerned about animal welfare. No-one wants to see animals suffering and many of us protest about wanton acts of cruelty. But very few people believe that animals have the same rights as human beings, that eating meat is cannibalism or keeping pets is slavery. This extreme view puts people off. That is why the animal rights movement wants to appear concerned about animal welfare. In this way it hijacks the support of the well-meaning animal welfare majority. If the animal rights activists really cared about animal welfare, then they would support animal experiments for veterinary research.

## Animal welfare and medical research

Genuine animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA recognise that animal experiments are important for medical progress. The policy of the RSPCA in this area is summed up as the 3Rs - it works with scientists towards the Reduction, Refinement and Replacement of animal