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ALTERNATIVES

IN VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION



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Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights

AVAR Addresses Violations of Federal Animal Welfare Act With USDA Petition - Students Join as Co-Petitioners

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The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR), along with several student co-petitioners, submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) a "Petition for Rulemaking and Enforcement Under the Animal Welfare Act to Eliminate Violations of the Review of Alternatives Provisions." The petition addresses a number of issues having to do with noncompliance with federal law as it pertains to alternatives to the harmful use of animals in U.S. veterinary medical schools.

As a co-petitioner and now a recent graduate, I joined the effort because of my experience in trying to implement alternatives to harmful animal experiments while a student at the University of Illinois. My experience, and faculty response to my efforts, reflected a serious problem with how students who want a humane education are treated, as well as how using alternatives are perceived by the professionals who are supposed to know what the law requires.



Dr. Linnaea Stull with her faithful home and work companion, Ellie.

When I was a first-year veterinary student, without any advance warning, I was told to participate in required physiology labs which involved the killing of many animals. I participated in the first lab and was upset and annoyed at the school for requiring this lab when I knew that alternatives to harming animals existed. I became determined not to participate in further labs and proceeded to research alternatives used at other veterinary schools. At the time, it seemed the professors never fully and seriously looked at whether an alternative was available. After I brought an enormous amount of information about alternatives to their attention, they still dismissed my concerns. With the support of other veterinary students, and as a last resort, I went to the press. The faculty ultimately changed their policy, but they did so only under severe pressure.

There obviously is a great need to bring this problem to the attention of law enforcement agencies. The USDA petition requests that an immediate investigation and citation is initiated when any veterinary school fails to fully

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Violations of Federal Animal Welfare Act

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comply with the review of alternatives requirement, including the failure to consider alternatives and the failure to provide a narrative citing methods and sources used to determine that alternatives were not available. The petition also seeks to amend the regulation for painful procedures by clarifying, as per federal law, that a "painful procedure" includes any procedure that may cause pain and distress, even if pain-relieving drugs are administered, and that a painful procedure automatically requires a review of the availability of alternatives. The petition also addresses redundant animal experiments and requires that personnel who use animals at federally-funded facilities receive proper training.

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is addressing the petition and it promises to try to fix the numerous violations of federal law that continue at many U.S. veterinary medical schools. In the meantime, my advice to students is: If you aren't receiving an alternative to harming animals, first go to the faculty and provide them with information on an available alternative to the particular lab. Remind them of the law regarding alternatives. If that doesn't work, contact the school's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Lastly, contact your local USDA office and ask to speak with the inspector for your area.

The law is on our side regarding the use of alternatives to harming and killing animals. Veterinary schools are required to use alternatives when available and, having first-hand knowledge about what the schools are requiring in their veterinary training, students are in the perfect position to help keep our federal laws enforced.

The petition can be viewed on AVAR's Web site: <http://avar.org>.

InterNICHE Announces New Alternatives Book: *from Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse (2nd edition)*



New alternatives book from Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative methods for a progressive, human education.

The International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE) in February 2003 announced the publication of *from Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative methods for a progressive, human education*. This 544-page book investigates state-of-the-art alternative tools and approaches to support ethical and effective knowledge and skills acquisition within biological science, medical, and veterinary medical education.

Using primary research, comprehensive information on over 500 of the latest products within the fields of anatomy, clinical skills and surgery, critical care, physiology, and pharmacology is presented in the book. Listed by discipline and then medium, the application, specifications, and source for each product are detailed.

Ten case studies, written by university teachers who are at the forefront of new teaching approaches, demonstrate how the alternatives have replaced harmful animal use and improved the quality of education in their own departments. Assessment of alternatives, creativity and curricular design, and the broader impact of humane education are also addressed. Finally, 800 further resources provide links to information-rich Web sites and printed material, to relevant organizations around the world, and to the producers and distributors of alternatives.

The book is available direct from InterNICHE at <http://www.interniche.org>.