

Tufts University Veterinary Student Conducts Survey on Willed Body Donation Programs

Lindsey Nielsen, a first-year veterinary student at Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, is surveying veterinary students at schools throughout the United States on their opinions on willed body donation programs.

Nielsen initiated the survey because Tufts University is frequently approached by students from other veterinary schools who are interested in learning more about body donation programs and how to start one. Tufts has had a willed body donation program for small animals for more than 10 years. The program has supplied all the cadavers needed for the school's anatomy training, as well as for other training, including continuing education programs. Tufts also recently started accepting farmed animals from local farms to be used as cadavers for anatomy training.

The goal of the survey, which is supported with funding from AVAR, is to assess student ethics regarding willed body donation programs (versus other sources of animals) and to determine what some of the concerns are with regard to implementing these programs. This information will then be used to support students at other schools who are seeking to start a program.

If you are interested in filling out a survey, please contact Nielsen at Lindsey.Nielsen@tufts.edu.

Deadline for completion of the surveys is August 1, 2006. Survey results will be published in a future issue of *Alternatives*.

Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges Holds Education Symposium on Alternatives in Veterinary Education

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) hosted an education symposium in Washington, D.C., in March entitled "The Use of Animals in Veterinary Medical Teaching – Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement." In attendance at the conference were faculty of U.S. and foreign veterinary schools, animal research interests, and representatives of animal protection groups (including AVAR veterinary consultant Susan Krebsbach, DVM, and National Director Teri Barnato). Also attending were representatives of the American Veterinary Medical Association, alternatives manufacturers, funding agencies, and agents of the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Animal Care (USDA-APHIS).

The USDA-APHIS was the symposium's primary sponsor. "Charged with enforcing the Animal Welfare Act, Animal Care supports efforts to implement the three 'R's' of refinement, reduction, and replacement of the use of animals in teaching, research, and testing. We recognize that this symposium offers a unique opportunity to foster cooperation and build bridges between the veterinary academia and the animal protection community," said Chester Gipson, deputy administrator. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Alternatives Research and Development Foundation, which funds and promotes the development, validation, and adoption of non-animal methods in biomedical research, product testing, and education.

AVAR's Petition Highlighted

The symposium covered a wide range of topics, including information on adult learning theory, the benefits and drawbacks of using animals as teaching tools, regulatory issues regarding animal use, ethical issues surrounding the use of animals in education, information on specific alternatives to the harmful use of animals in veterinary education, and a discussion on building bridges with the animal protection community.

AVAR's Petition for Rulemaking and Enforcement Under the Animal Welfare Act to Eliminate Violations of the Review of Alternatives Provisions, which was filed with the USDA in 2002, was highlighted in a presentation on compliance and regulatory issues. Dr. Robert Willems of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service provided a comparison of citations immediately after the petition was filed with a more recent inspection of U.S. veterinary schools, at which time USDA inspectors reviewed teaching protocols to see if a search of alternatives to harmful animal use was done and documented. He noted that, immediately after the petition was filed, most veterinary schools were cited for not doing a literature search for alternatives when animals were used, but there were no recent violations in this regard. However, the USDA is aware, for example, that many veterinary schools continue to use terminal procedures in their training, even though there clearly are numerous alternatives to them, many of which are being used at other veterinary schools. Other harmful uses of animals also continue at many U.S. veterinary schools, even though many varieties of alternatives exist.

Federal law requires that institutions search for alternatives and justify why an alternative cannot be used; the law does not require the use of alternatives. Subsequently, the schools which continue to use terminal surgeries in their student training, for example, have completed the literature search for an alternative, documented their findings, and justified not using the alternative, thus complying with federal law. The USDA inspectors' next job will be to look at the justifications being used for not using non-harmful alternatives. The USDA also clarified that terminal surgeries are considered painful procedures under the law, even though anesthetics are used.

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