When 28 students are rewarded in national competition for projects that caused pain to animals, it is clear that humanitarians still have a great deal of work ahead of them.

A 17-year-old Iowa girl won a trip to the 1974 International Science and Engineering Fair by grafting skin onto 12 mice in the basement of her home after only talking with a veterinarian. One mouse died, one sloughed off the graft, and the others were killed by the student with an overdose of ether.

A 15-year-old Kentucky boy won a trip to the same fair by trapping three squirrels in a park, confining them to cages in his basement, and giving them electric shocks over a period of several months to learn if they would respond to visual tests. At the conclusion of the experiment he sold two of the squirrels to a research laboratory.

This is the type of relationship with animals that some school systems in the United States are encouraging. It is a far cry from the "respect for all life" that The Humane Society of the United States is attempting to teach young people through ambitious projects aimed at incorporating kindness into the curriculum of the nation's schools. (See HSUS Special Report on Teaching Children to be Kind, issued in June 1974.)

Because taxpayers are underwriting science projects through the schools, and because a
considerable amount of federal money is being spent on international science fair competition, science projects that involve cruelty to animals should be of concern to every U.S. citizen. Moreover, abolition of such projects should be the objective of all animal lovers and humane organizations.

The Humane Society of the United States has been crusading for many years to stop science projects and classroom demonstrations that inflict pain, suffering, or injury on any warm-blooded animal. HSUS mounted its most concerted effort, however, in 1973 when it issued Guiding Principles for the Use of Animals in Elementary and Secondary Education. These principles prohibit amateur surgery, the induction of cancer, and all other painful procedures on vertebrate animals (such as hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, mice). Several thousand copies of these principles have been distributed to school boards, administrators, and teachers throughout the nation. Many school systems and teachers have reported the adoption of all or most of the items contained in the principles.

A significant step toward stopping cruelty to animals in schools was achieved in 1973 when California enacted legislation that bans the anaesthetizing, subjecting to pain, injury, or inhumane death of vertebrate animals in all public school-sponsored projects. The legislation was drafted by State Sen. Albert S. Rodda of Sacramento, who was enthusiastically supported by HSUS.

In testimony on the proposed ban, presented at the invitation of the State Assembly Education Committee, HSUS West Coast Regional Director Herbert N. Martin said:

“What concerns us, when children who have barely attained the age of reason are encouraged to experiment on living animals, is the kind of attitude that is being cultivated.”

In some cases the person listed as supervisor didn’t see the animals even once during the entire course of the project.

Rice University, has succeeded over the past few years in significantly improving the animal rules of the Science Engineering Fair of Houston. This fair has adopted most of the HSUS Guiding Principles.

The most recent development was the improvement in projects accepted for competition in the 1974 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the final stage of competition for about 90% of the state and local science fairs in the nation. HSUS representatives who attended the Fair, held at Notre Dame University last May, reported there were no projects involving experiments on monkeys, a popular subject at previous Fairs, and a reduction in the number of projects involving home surgery on animals. They also found a greater awareness by student exhibitors that rules did exist governing the humane use of animals.

Yet, in spite of these improvements, HSUS consultant F. Barbara Orlans, Ph.D., found “an overwhelming emphasis” on harming vertebrate animals. Out of 35 projects that involved the use of small mammals, 28 involved the infliction of harm or painful death. HSUS officials believe that projects involving pain to animals will be eliminated only when the following ISEF Fair regulations and practices are changed:

1. Weak Fair rules that explicitly sanction all surgical procedures, use of anaesthetic drugs, ionizing radiation, disease-causing organisms, and carcinogens. (Furthermore, since there is no restriction on the infliction of pain, students often perform experiments involving the induction of cancer, use of chemicals at toxic levels, drugs producing pain or deformity, use of extreme temperatures, and electric shock.)

2. Lack of enforcement of the good Fair rules urging the use of microscopic animals, worms, and insects instead of vertebrate animals.

“Humanitarians must now focus their efforts on getting science fair officials to do away with these problem areas,” said Dr. Orlans, a physiologist with the National Institutes of Health and a longtime crusader against cruelty to animals in classrooms and laboratories.

“Adoption of the HSUS Guiding Principles by local and state science fairs instead of the widely used ISEF rules would completely eliminate all projects involving pain to animals.”
had not been subjected to noise, by a 17-year-old Oklahoma girl.

Her conclusion: the three hamsters, which lost half of their weight by the end of the 6-week period, died from disease in only 1 week, whereas three hamsters that had not been exposed to the noise took 4 weeks to die after being exposed to similar bacteria.

- Subjecting two mice to cigarette smoke daily for 3 months by a 17-year-old Washington, D.C., youth.

The results, known for many years by the entire U.S. scientific community: gross abnormalities developed in the lungs.

- Injection of toxic doses of aspirin solution into pregnant rats daily for 2 weeks by a 15-year-old Colorado girl.

Lumps developed in the mothers. The babies, which were killed and dissected 4 hours after birth, developed brain and lung damage.

- Feeding a diet deficient in vitamin C to hamsters by a 16-year-old Texas boy.

Results: weakness, rough coat, watery eyes. Commented Dr. Orlans: "These symptoms must have resulted from some factor other than diet because it is a well-known scientific fact that hamsters can metabolize their own vitamin C."

Dr. Orlans criticized the veterinarian who supervised the project because he obviously wasn't "skilled and qualified in the field under investigation," as required by Fair rules. "A completely unscientific project," Dr. Orlans said.

- Cancerous tumors grafted into the bodies of 35 mice by a 17-year-old Illinois girl.

- Rat housed in a cage so small it could hardly move to determine the effects of lack of exercise, by a 17-year-old Missouri youth.

Result: the rat lost interest in everything, became paranoid, mean, and hostile. This rat and another one, which was housed in larger quarters, were killed and dissected. The student told Dr. Orlans that the veterinarian who acted as supervisor for the project never saw the animals and that he was too busy to give much advice on procedures. Dr. Orlans condemned the project as inhumane and criticized the fact that the student knew nothing about brain histology, which was the sole purpose for having killed the animals.

- Two rats placed in a heat chamber to determine disrupting chemical homeostasis of rat urine, by a 17-year-old Indiana girl.

The heat chamber was so crude that the temperature went to 134°F instead of the planned 97°F and had no observation panel. Consequently, two animals died.

Dr. Orlans and Inman concluded that many of the new animal regulations were not implemented or enforced. For instance, the rule that requires that euthanasia be administered by an adult super-

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“We have been able to convince thousands of biology teachers of the importance of the humane treatment of animals.”

visor was frequently violated, as evidence by number of students that reported personally killing animals. The rule that requires that supervisors be experienced, qualified, and actively engaged in the field under investigation was frequently ignored.

It was obvious from student reports that many project supervisors failed to provide the “continuing or on-the-spot supervision” required for projects conducted in students’ homes. In some cases, the person listed as supervisor didn’t see the animals even once during the entire course of the project. The prerequisite that the proposed project be submitted in writing for approval prior to the beginning of experimentation was frequently violated. Some projects were totally unplanned and unapproved.

In visits to several local fairs earlier this year, HSUS representatives discovered that guidelines for judges issued by some fairs made no mention of existing animal regulations. As a result, exhibitors were not disqualified or even penalized for ignoring them. Nevertheless, HSUS officials have been encouraged by the fact that some progress has been made.

“TYPICAL SCIENCE FAIR CRUELTY—This entry in a local Maryland science fair is typical of experiments that students conduct on animals. The exhibitor, a junior high school student, reported that the mouse fed on protein died in 5 days and the one fed on carbohydrates died in 7.

Send for free copies of (a) HSUS Guiding Principles for Use of Animals in Elementary and Secondary Schools and (b) HSUS’s listing of recommended study projects and project books to distribute to members of your state and local boards of education, superintendents of schools, principals, school district science coordinators, and biology teachers.

A CONSTRUCTIVE EXPERIMENT—The Humane Society encourages the undertaking of projects that provide the student a constructive learning experience without harming animals. The student who conducted this project must have attained a much greater respect for barn owls.

It’s Your Tax Money


The military services also provide judges, who receive per diem expenses in addition to their salaries during the Fair. In 1973, the Army sent 26 judges, including 3 colonels, the Air Force, 16, and the Navy, 34.

You Can Help!

1. Contact administrators of your local science fairs and find a means of involving yourself in preparations and formulation of rules.

2. Write to federal agencies cooperating with the International Science and Engineering Fair to protest the use of taxpayers’ money on projects involving cruelty to animals. Enclose a copy of the HSUS Guiding Principles.

3. Have your state legislator send to HSUS headquarters for a copy of the HSUS Model State Law on Student Use of Animals in Schools. Have your local humane society make a project out of getting the law enacted.

4. Send a contribution to HSUS to continue its work of monitoring science fairs and educating educators about ways of teaching science to children without practicing cruelty to animals.

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