Legislation and Regulation

Alternatives Bills Re-introduced

H.R. 4805, also known as the Research Modernization Bill (int J Stud Anim Prob 1 (2) 1981), has been re-introduced as H.R. 556 into the 97th Congress by Robert A. Roe (D-NJ). Congressmen Richmond (D-NY) and Hollenbeck (R-NH) are co-sponsors of the bill. The language of H.R. 556 contains several changes although the basic provisions of H.R. 4805 (establishment of a National Center for Alternatives Research and reallocation of 30-50% of federal funds currently supporting animal research to development of alternatives) remain intact. The major alterations include: a provision for a committee of at least 10 members to advise the Senate, establishment of the Center outside rather than under the aegis of the National Institutes of Health, weakening of the statement on duplication of live animal experiments (changed from “eliminating” to “eliminating or minimizing”), and a change in the requirement to publish a notification of new alternatives in the Federal Register (refers only to alternatives under the aegis of the National Institutes of Health).

The bill has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture, specifically excluding rats and mice. Animal welfare groups are urging inclusion of these species in the regulations. The National Society for Medical Research has stated that, in the future, “animal and mice deserve equal protection under the Act, the matter is not clear-cut. Research Animal Alliance (RAA), a non-profit, non-legislative association which represents users of laboratory animals in Washington, has commented as follows: “In July 1980, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA held public meetings to solicit comments regarding the regulations and standards promulgated under the Animal Welfare Act. The recommendations made most often by representatives of animal welfare organizations was the inclusion of rats and mice under the Animal Welfare Act. Animal welfare representatives argued that rats and mice experience pain and thus, require the same protection that the AWA provides other species. No one would argue that rats and mice should be afforded the same safeguards as other species. The laboratory animal community’s stand on this issue was established via a questionnaire disseminated to the RAA membership. The overwhelming majority of the respondents favored the inclusion of rats and mice under the AWA.

Rats, Mice and the RAA

There has been a recent flurry of interest in Washington in the workings of the federal Animal Welfare Act and the scope of the associated regulations, particularly as they bear on the kinds of animals covered by the law. The Act itself defines “animal” as “any live or dead dog, cat, monkey (nonhuman primate mammal), guinea pig, hamster, rat, mouse, or such other warm-blooded animal, as the Secretary may determine is being used... for research, testing, experimentation, or exhibition purposes or as a pet...” (U.S.C. §2131-2156, 76, Section 2(g) [emphasis added], but the regulations written by the administering agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, specifically exclude rats and mice. Animal welfare groups are urging inclusion of these species in the regulations, and the National Society for Medical Research has stated that, in the future, “animal and mice deserve equal protection under the Act, the matter is not clear-cut.” Research Animal Alliance (RAA), a non-profit, non-legislative association which represents users of laboratory animals in Washington, has commented as follows: “In July 1980, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA held public meetings to solicit comments regarding the regulations and standards promulgated under the Animal Welfare Act. The recommendations made most often by representatives of animal welfare organizations was the inclusion of rats and mice under the Animal Welfare Act. Animal welfare representatives argued that rats and mice experience pain and thus, require the same protection that the AWA provides other species. No one would argue that rats and mice should be afforded the same safeguards as other species. The laboratory animal community’s stand on this issue was established via a questionnaire disseminated to the RAA membership. The overwhelming majority of the respondents favored the inclusion of rats and mice under the AWA.

Approximately 92% of all research animals are rats and mice. Thus, APHIS is simply not equipped to monitor this vast number of animals. The reporting requirements, as applied to species currently covered under the Act, require the animals be reported individually. Obviously, for those institutions using large numbers of rats and mice, this would be an impossible administrative task.

RAA, in voicing the opinion of its membership, has informed APHIS that, “RAA is a strong proponent of the humane treatment of all species of animals, and it does not oppose the inclusion of rats and mice in accordance with the current ‘Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals’ (ILAR).” However, practical as well as philosophical considerations must be addressed, and thus, RAA urges a reassessment of the reporting requirements to minimize paperwork burdens while still preserving the intent of this proposed amendment.

Meetings and Announcements

MEETING REPORT

APA Symposium on Ethics

The American Psychological Association (APA) devoted one symposium to “Ethical Issues in Research with Animals” at its September 1980 annual meeting in Montreal, Canada. Dr. Evan F. Segal (San Diego State University) organized and chaired the meeting, in which four papers were presented.

Dr. Derek Blackman (University College, Cardiff, Wales) gave a review of the regulation of psychological experimentation in the U.K. He contended that the licensing procedure required by the British Cruelty to Animals Act is not so much a restriction of scientific freedom as a form of protection for scientists in that they cannot be privately prosecuted for animal cruelty if they are licensed. Blackman referred to the British Psychological Association’s survey and review of concerns published in its 1979 Bulletin and noted that the society now has a Standing Advisory Committee which gives input to the Home Secretary. Dr. Perrie Adams (University of Texas, Galveston) gave a paper entitled “The Scientist’s Concern for Animal Welfare” in which he mentioned the new APA guidelines, which are similar to those of the Neuroscience Association (published in that organization’s March 1980 newsletter). Adams stressed that abused animals will give worthless results and that pain, once it has been
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The bill has been referred to the congressional committees on Science and Technology, and Energy and Commerce.

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