Author Responds to Review

A review of my book, Alternatives to Pain in Experiments on Animals, recently appeared in your journal (Volume 2(3):199-161, 1981). I appreciate the reviewer's favorable comments and have benefited from several of his corrections, for instance that the Ames Test identifies mutagenic chemicals but not tumorigenic cells. I was also mistaken in saying that Chemie-Gruenenthal, the manufacturer of thalidomide, was acquitted when on trial for inadequate testing of the drug, when in fact they settled out of court. My three paragraphs over-condensed a complicated case, but my main point was that animal testing is often misleading. As with the Dulbecco and Saxen experiment, could have demystified over-condensed a complicated scientific data. For the latter I sincerely apologize to my readers, since my disagreement with the reviewer's contention as a euphemism for "fetal wastage." I did not in fact confuse the two. In the published version, it says: "This highly successful colony has been maintained at a population of approximately 800 monkeys, surplus animals produced on the island are harvested periodically." The monkeys on litter have cleaner housing than did the normal bare-floor condition. The monkeys on litter have cleaner coats and observation windows remain less soiled.

Behavior: Of the various effects, perhaps the most important is that aggression is reduced by a factor of 5 in the litter condition. Cost: Counting the cost of the litter itself, the litter condition is twice as economical since cleaning time is cut by almost 60%.

We regret that this error was not caught by the author or by us before the article went into print. However, we feel bound to point out that "harvest" has become a confusing term when used in relation to animals: in some contexts, it has functioned as a euphemism for "kill." Unfortunately, we did not know that the word was being used in Dr. Held's article (and in his letter) to mean "collect," and we are grateful to Dr. Held for setting the record straight. —Ed.

Joe R. Held, DVM
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20205

Reference
Woodchip litter in macaque groups.

Livestock Abuse in Trucks and Sale Yards

In my opinion, the number one animal welfare problem in the U.S. is the abuse of livestock during transportation and while they are passing through marketing facilities. The problem is greatest in the southeastern, south central and southwestern regions of the country. Most of the abuses which occur are already outlawed under existing federal, state, and city anti-cruelty and humane laws. The problem is that the laws are not being enforced. I have witnessed deliberate cruelty occurring on a regular basis in many livestock operations. Based on my extensive travels throughout the U.S., I estimate that 10 to 15% of livestock markets, feedlots, ranches and slaughter plants are allowing gross cruelty to occur. These are not isolated incidents. Specific examples of abuses include kicking mother cows in the face with spurs, hitting calves at a sale barn with boards with nails in them; trucks with broken floors, slamming heavy overhead gates on the backs of cattle; over-powered hydraulic squeeze chutes. This resulted in rupturing the animal internally. Hydraulic squeeze chutes are safe handling devices if used correctly (Grandin 1977, 1980a).

Physical abuse and poor husbandry practices cost the livestock industry money. Stopping these abuses would save the industry millions of dollars annually by reducing death losses, sickness, loss of weight gains and bruises. Why are these abuses allowed to continue? The cattle industry is segmented. The basic segments in the southern regions are rancher, local auction, trucker, order buyer barn, trucker, feeder, and finally the slaughter plants.

Each person along the marketing chain simply passes the death losses, bruises and sickness to the next person in the chain (Grandin 1980b). The cattle industry as a whole loses money. Each individual along the chain collects his money, but he does not see the losses come directly out of his pocket. Losses are also tolerated for tax and other financial reasons.

Here are some typical examples of passed-on losses: A small rancher in the Southeast is not going to vaccinate, dehorn, castrate and prewean his young calves. If hedocs not make his own money, but he does not see the losses come directly out of his pocket. Losses are also tolerated for tax and other financial reasons.