THE POTENTIAL FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL COMMITTEE

This goal can be accomplished by court and other action constructing and enforcing exist­­ing laws, by new legislation improving those laws, and by assertive participation of people concerned about animal suffering. These people should strive to be named to such committees and, once a member, stand firm for animal protection, even if they must be avoided if the community cannot be told what is going on. It violates the equal protection con­cept of federal and state constitutions be­cause it applies only to members of a committee; other persons who may know as much or more than those members are not so constrained. It violates the con­stitutional guarantee of the right of free speech. It conflicts with the federal Freedom of In­formation Act.

A basic consideration in the concern for the humane usage of animals in laboratories and thus in the laws, regulations, and special materials does not apply when animals are in­volved. The moral consideration that is inherent in our desire to protect animals from human infliction of suffering is reflected in the AWA itself by its very title and by its specific reference to “society’s concern for the welfare of animals.” To seek in­formation about conditions and treatment of committee members, are needed. Such new laws and regulations should cover four areas.

1. The committee should be given the responsibility and authority to require the expla­nation in advance of a reasonable ra­tionale for the proposed use of animals, what is to be achieved, what benefit it will provide, and whyaneous that a com­mittee can be somewhat effective under existing laws, and in minimizing laboratory­animal suffering. Public purview can lead to additional legislation for laboratory­animal welfare, regulations implementing that legislation, and more voluntary and cooperative humane action by the institu­tions and people using the animals.

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This article tried to demonstrate that a com­mittee can be somewhat effective under existing laws, and in minimizing laboratory­animal suffering. Public purview can lead to additional legislation for laboratory­animal welfare, regulations implementing that legislation, and more voluntary and cooperative humane action by the institu­tions and people using the animals.

We need to strengthen the status, makeup, and authority of the institutional animal committee and increase its responsibility.

I firmly believe that the committee on which I served did in fact lessen animal suffering by its very existence, by its review of procedures and facilities, and by its recommendations for change. Although others may have had very unsatisfactory experiences on or with institutional animal committees, the committee concept should not be abandoned.

As long as our human society requires that animals be used for experiments and testing, our goal must be to minimize their suffering; a responsible committee set up for that purpose must be one of the most important means of achieving the goal. Members of such committees should be knowledgeable for scientific purposes, and should conscientiously represent the welfare of the animal subjects and the public concern for ending animal suffering. With a spirit of cooperation, public and scien­tific members of the committee should together seek to implement society’s con­cerns for animal welfare and always seek to reduce animal usage and preclude suf­fering. This is what the AWA is about, but its provisions and implementation need strengthening and broadening. The AWA “condones” necessary use and abortion or degrades as useless this commit­tee concept, as some have urged, because of certain perceived inadequacies. Many people have had involving institutional animal committees, the movement will be beneficial to the cause only if the necessary means are employed. The committee must be one of the best hopes, if not the best hope, for the diminishment and even the eventual cessation of animal suf­fering in laboratories.

The article “Serving on an Institutional Animal Committee” is intended to de­scribe how one particular committee op­erates and what kinds of cases it considers. The article provides a general description of committee activities and experiences on or with institutional animal committees, and its experiences would help in this regard. Another means of strengthening would be to require a minimum proportion of public members on the committee and to select community representatives impartially, as by a court or an independent public agency of office.

CONCLUSION

If all of us in the animal­protection movement do know how difficult leg­islation is to come by, how vigorous and well financed the opposition is. But if we put forth a basic blueprint for change and improvement as just described, we will unite ourselves, act more effectively, and increase our chances of achieving our goals.

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