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The Use of Animals in Research and Teaching

Last week the Subcommittee on Public Health and Welfare of the House of Representatives Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce held hearings on several bills concerned with the care, housing, and treatment of animals used in research or teaching. The several bills include a number of proposals for establishing standards for animal care and use, for licensing or certifying individuals or laboratories to use animals for research purposes, for reporting the details of experimental procedure to a Federal Government office, and for maintaining a reference library of detailed information about previous research involving animals, in order to determine before a grant or contract is approved whether similar or identical research has been previously conducted.

One of the bills (H.R. 5191, introduced by Congressman Edward R. Roybal of Los Angeles) adopts the more constructive approach of authorizing the Surgeon General to use a variety of means to aid in the improvement of laboratory animal stocks, quarters, and maintenance methods, the training of animal caretakers, and the study and prevention of diseases and impairments of laboratory animals.

Whether any legislation on animal care and use will be enacted during this session of Congress is still uncertain, but the current interest makes this an appropriate time to publish the following resolution which endorses a constructive approach toward these problems and which was adopted by the AAAS Board of Directors on 28 March 1965.

The Board of Directors of the American Association for the Advancement of Science reaffirms its conviction, stated in 1948, "that animal experimentation is essential for progress in the biological and medical sciences, . . . in the study of, and the control of, diseases, especially those of childhood, and in the perfecting of those procedures and treatments to which no small part of our community owes its health and life." Proper care and humane treatment of laboratory animals used in teaching and research are essential both in order to maintain the high quality needed for the advancement of science and medicine and as a moral obligation of a civilized society.

The Board believes that the attainment of these high purposes can best be aided by constructive means, such as the encouragement of research on the causes, prevention, and treatment of diseases of laboratory animals, including studies on their production, growth, health, maintenance, comfort, and utilization; the establishment of training programs in laboratory animal medicine; grants for the construction, improvement, expansion, and renovation of laboratory animal facilities with provision for humane housing, care, treatment, and utilization; the provision of technical assistance to organizations using laboratory animals; and the appointment of advisory committees of competent scientists to advise government agencies and other agencies and institutions on the welfare and utilization of laboratory animals.

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