

# SCIENCE

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# LETTERS

## The Possibility of Tenure

A recent ScienceScope item about my tenure dispute with the University of California (10 July, p. 151) quoted me as saying that my minimum requirements for settlement included gaining tenure. There was an important phrase missing that changed the context of what I actually said. My minimum requirements for settlement included a process with the possibility of gaining tenure. It is easy to understand how the reporter might not have heard the entire sentence—the interview was conducted during a crowded, informal, and hurried press conference after my congressional testimony.

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## GenPharm's Knockout Mice

In his article "Researchers wrestle with concerns over cost and access" (Research News, 5 June, p. 1393), John Travis discusses transgenic animals that carry gene inactivations (knockouts) and their availability to the scientific community through GenPharm. We would like to point out some key aspects of this issue not mentioned in the article.

GenPharm recognized some time ago the need for a reliable and efficient source of widely used transgenic animals for the academic and industrial community. This need was not being met by university laboratories or by other businesses that supply animals for research. GenPharm initially invests a minimum of 9 to 12 months of work and tens of thousands of dollars on every strain it offers. This investment is not government subsidized. The investment enables researchers to expect from GenPharm substantial quantities of transgenic mice that are pathogen free, genotyped, and supplied promptly.

In most cases, patents are pending for transgenic animals that reflect the intellectual property rights of the inventors and the institutions in which they work. In order to breed and sell animals, GenPharm pays for a license from those who hold the patent rights for these animals. GenPharm has an obligation to the holders of the patent rights to protect their proprietary interests by limiting the breeding of these strains to the experimental needs of the investigator.

GenPharm does not and should not require any rights to discoveries made using mice it sells, and we will not accept new transgenic animals from institutions that require this condition of sale.

Fortunately, many problems in the field of biotechnology have been foreseen by academic institutions and by the National Institutes of Health, who have collectively adopted a policy of material transfer agreements under which transgenic animals fall. These agreements recognize the need to retain intellectual property rights and commercial rights to materials transferred between organizations. GenPharm's restrictions are, in fact, similar to existing material transfer agreements at universities. They are not "severe" or "expensive" restrictions on breeding. Additionally, our mice are far from being at "unbelievably exorbitant" prices. At about twice the price of a Jackson Laboratory's nontransgenic mouse line, the transgenic mice provided by GenPharm are reasonably priced.

We welcome feedback on our policies in this area and are ready to consider any suggestion for improving them.

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## Exclusive Academies

There is no simple answer, under the present rules, to Faye Flam's query, "What should it take to join science's most exclusive club?" (News & Comment, 15 May, p. 960). If one considers how "exclusive" the different major science academies in the world are (as measured by total number of members per million citizens), then the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) (with 7.9 members per million citizens) is not "science's most exclusive club": it still is more exclusive than the Royal Society (20.6) or the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (54.2), but less exclusive than the Accademia dei Lincei (4.6) or the Académie des Sciences (5.7) (1). "Exclusive," of course, does not mean "better."

Faye Flam quotes an unnamed chemist as stating that Carl Sagan's admission to the