

Your Right to Know Animal Experiments in Your Community

PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE
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This fact sheet is a guide for learning about laboratory experiments in your community. Your taxes and contributions to foundations support the overwhelming majority of these experiments, and you have a right to information about them. This booklet will help you learn who is conducting research, what previous research they have done, the source and amount of funding, relevant animal welfare laws and guidelines, how to review federal inspection reports from laboratories, and more.

SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE FACILITY OR EXPERIMENT

Animal experiments are conducted at private laboratories, universities, government institutions, high schools, and other facilities. You may not be able to learn about all of them with equal ease. Evaluate your resources. Do you have the time and energy to commit to an all out struggle with a major pharmaceutical company or are you more concerned with a specific experimenter at a local university?

There are a number of other considerations in determining the focus of your investigation. Are violations of federal or local law probable? Are large numbers of animals involved? Are they subjected to painful or blatantly useless experiments? Are you likely to draw public support and attention with your campaign? You may not be able to answer all of these questions without obtaining some preliminary information.

Most research institutions that use animals are required to be registered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Facilities using only mice, rats, birds, or cold-blooded animals are not required to register, because the USDA has specifically excluded these animals from coverage under the Animal Welfare Act. Registered facilities are listed in the USDA publication, *Animal Welfare: List of Registered Research Facilities*. To order, contact:

Animal Care
USDA/APHIS
4700 River Rd., Unit 84
Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: 301-734-7833
ace@usda.gov
<<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/awainfo.html>>

If ordering online, visit the above Web address and select "research" under "Other Program Publications, Facility Lists." This site also allows access to lists of registered animal dealers, exhibitors, and handlers under the same area.

COLLECTING INFORMATION

Animal Care Laws and Guidelines

It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the laws concerning animal use in laboratories, policies on the use of animals from shelters (pound seizure laws), and local anti-cruelty statutes. Local and state laws can be found in your public library or law library. The Animal Welfare Act is a federal law that sets minimum standards for the care and use of animals in laboratories. For a free copy, contact:

Animal Care
USDA/APHIS
4700 River Rd., Unit 84
Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: 301-734-7833
ace@usda.gov
<<http://extranet.aphis.usda.gov/ac/awainfo.html>>

If ordering online, visit the above Web address and select "Animal Welfare Act (AWA) (pdf)."

To receive additional Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) documents, including lists on numbers of "reportable" animals used in research, go to <<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/awrpt/awrpt97.html>>.

The NIH Guide to the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and *The Public Health Service Policy* are two publications which provide guidelines for care of animals in laboratories. For a copy of *The NIH Guide*, contact:

National Academy Press
2101 Constitution Ave., N.W., Lockbox 285
Washington, DC 20055
Phone: 1-888-624-8373 or 202-334-3313
zjones@nas.edu
<<http://www.nap.edu>>

For a copy of *The Public Health Service Policy*, contact:

National Institutes of Health
Office for Protection from Research Risks
Division of Animal Welfare
6100 Executive Blvd., #3B01
Rockville, MD 20892
Phone: 301-402-6691

As well, both publications can be accessed online at <http://www.nih.gov/grants/oprr/library_animal.htm>.

Each USDA-registered facility is required to form its own Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to review proposed animal experiments and determine whether they conform to federal law and the NIH guidelines. IACUC meetings may or may not be open to the public. If the meetings are closed, find out whether it is by state law or by institutional policy. Some states have "sunshine laws" which require that the meetings be open to the public. Topics discussed include the kinds of species being used, their sources (shelters, breeding facilities, etc.), the nature of the experiments, and the opinions of fellow researchers.

Publicly Available Information

COMPUTER RETRIEVAL OF INFORMATION ON SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS (CRISP)

The Public Health Service (PHS), which includes the National Institutes of Health, is a major source of federal research monies. Information on PHS-funded experiments can be obtained by requesting a CRISP report. This information is more current than the USDA and NIH grant reports, due to a much shorter time lag between filing and publication. The information includes the amount of the grant award, the researcher's name and address, the abstract of the experiment, and the types of animals used.

Your request may be based on the site and year of the research, researchers' names, research with a particular type of animal, a description of the experiment, or the animals used by a particular researcher. You can obtain research abstracts even if you only know the location of the laboratory. To access CRISP, go to <http://commons.cit.nih.gov/crisp/owa/CRISP.Generate_Ticket>.

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

A Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request often generates substantial information on the care and use of animals at research institutions. Follow the format on the sample letter at the end of this section (according to whether you are filing as an organization or as an individual). Put a number on your request for your own reference and save copies of your letters. The FOIA office is required to send a written response within ten days of receiving your letter, but the actual documents take longer to process.

The Freedom of Information Act does not answer questions; it only gives you copies of documents, so phrase your letter accordingly. Examples of documents you can request are listed below. Be aware that gathering this information will prob-

ably take weeks or months, so request these reports as early as possible. Also, be sure to keep in touch with the FOIA office by phone or letter. This may speed their response.

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, USDA

Most research institutions are inspected by the USDA at least once every year. The results of these inspections are available through FOIA. The following documents can be obtained from the APHIS department of the USDA:

- **Annual Reports (for a given facility):** Include the numbers and types of animals listed by facility and categorize the experiments according to the degree of pain experienced by the animals.
- **Inspection Reports (only available for non-federal facilities):** List detailed results of inspections performed by the USDA according to Animal Welfare Act specifications. Any violations of the Act are included.
- **Program of Veterinary Care:** Gives the veterinarian's name, address, and health care specifications for the institution, including euthanasia procedures.
- **Application for Registration:** Lists the numbers of animals used annually, the principal investigators and other key staff, and the name of the funding agency, if the institution is federally funded.

Correspondence between the USDA and the facility will also be included in a FOIA request.

Send your Freedom of Information Act request to:

Freedom of Information Act Coordinator
USDA/APHIS
4700 River Rd., Unit 50
Riverdale, MD 20737-1232
Phone: 301-734-8296

Basic inspection reports (without a FOIA) are available at <https://foia.aphis.usda.gov/an_welfare/ac.html>.

More extensive or additional information obtainable through a FOIA request can be submitted electronically at <<https://foia.aphis.usda.gov>>. This site also contains extensive information on using the Freedom of Information Act to answer any questions you may have.

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, NIH

When research is funded by the National Institutes of Health, some additional materials may be available through FOIA: (1) the Grant Application, including the names of principal researchers, biographical sketches, project dates, the total project cost and breakdown of costs, a detailed description of the project, and the amount of the grant; (2) the Animal Welfare Assurances, including a listing of the persons responsible for compliance with the Animal Welfare Act, the name and job description of the staff veterinarian, the procedures followed by the IACUC, and the numbers and types of

animals in each facility; and (3) other information such as Annual Progress Reports, videotapes and photographs of experiments, and pertinent correspondence.

Each of the 32 components of the NIH has its own FOIA coordinator. To find out to whom a FOIA request should be sent, call 301-496-5633 and specify what documents you are requesting. You will be directed to a particular FOIA coordinator.

Although the NIH does not accept electronic submissions of FOIA requests, you can find additional information at <<http://www.nih.gov/od/foia/index.htm>>.

FOIA requests may be denied for a variety of reasons. Appeals of denials should be directed to:

**Freedom of Information Act Officer
National Institutes of Health**
Building 31, Room 2B39
31 Center Dr., MSC 2107
Bethesda, MD 20892-2107
Phone: 301-496-5633

THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

There are 15 different DoD components to which different FOIA requests should be sent. These are listed in a 12-page handbook available as a pdf file at <<http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/>>. This is the best place to start for anyone interested in submitting a DoD FOIA.

To submit a FOIA to one of the four major branches of the military, contact:

**Department of the Army
FOIA/Privacy Acts Office**
TAPC-PDR-PF
7798 Cissna Rd., Suite 205
Springfield, VA 22150-3197

**Department of the Navy
Chief of Naval Operations**
N09B30
2000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350-2000
<<http://www.ogc.secnav.hq.navy.mil/foia/>>

Department of the Air Force
11CS/SCSR (FOIA)
1000 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1000
<<http://www.foia.af.mil/>>

**Commandant of the Marine Corps (ARAD)
Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps**
2 Navy Annex
Washington, DC 20380-1775

Another useful site is the Department of Defense Research Database at <<http://dticam.dtic.mil/dodbr/>>. This site allows

access to non-classified research funded by the DoD.

Other government agencies that fund animal experiments have FOIA departments as well. These include the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Transportation, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, and the Veterans' Administration.

NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

If you already know the title of a research project but still need to review the final reports of the study, contact the National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. This organization maintains files of federal research and development activities. They can be reached at:

**U.S. Department of Commerce
National Technical Information Service (NTIS)**
5285 Port Royal Rd.
Springfield, VA 22161
Online Help Desk: 703-487-4640
Report Ordering Information: 703-487-4650
<<http://www.ntis.gov/>>

The Medical Literature

All medical schools have libraries, and most are open to the public. There, you can look up research published by specific individuals, similar work being done by other researchers, the source of research funding, other work which addresses the same needs in alternative ways, similar experiments performed on humans, and background statistics. Unrelated laboratory groups may have conducted experiments similar to the research you are examining.

Using Medline

Medline is an invaluable tool for anyone concerned with medical research. Users can access a database of nearly 4,000 selected medical journals, including most major ones. Published journal articles can be easily and efficiently identified, and the full text of articles can be retrieved from a university library.

There are a number of ways to access Medline from the Internet. Two useful Medline access sites are:

HealthWorld Medline:
<<http://www.healthy.net/library/search/medline.htm>>
PubMed Medline:
<<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/medline.html>>

Each of these sites allow the user to search through the vast database of published journal articles, but each is slightly different in layout and the search parameters offered. Try them both and use whichever suits your needs.

With either Medline search, you can click on the brief

SAMPLE FOIA REQUEST LETTER 1

[Individual's Return Address]

[Date]

Freedom of Information Act Officer

[Institution]

[Address]

[FOIA request #] (Select a number to keep track of your requests. You can use the date and any number of your choosing, as in 05-15-00 01.)

Dear Sir or Madam,

This request for records is made under the federal Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552.

This request pertains to [list experiment, research paper, institution, etc.] and includes, but is not limited to, the following records: [tailor your request to the materials you think you will need: grant proposals, annual reports, inspection reports, IACUC reports, correspondence, and any documents that show cost].

If any of the records or documents described above are considered to be exempt from release, please segregate and provide access to non-exempt portions, and justify deletions by reference to specific exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act.

I am prepared to pay all reasonable search and duplication fees up to an initial amount of [select a reasonable amount, e.g., \$25.00]. If the fees will exceed [previously selected dollar amount], please notify me by telephone before the request is processed so that I may decide whether to pay the fee.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to receiving your reply within ten business days.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Typed Name]

[Phone number]

[FOIA request #] (repeat the number given above)

citation of the article for more detailed information. This will usually include an abstract (a brief synopsis of the article).

If you want to find all published articles from a given author, it is best to use PubMed. Enter the author's last name followed by first and middle initials. To search within a field (title, author, etc.) using PubMed, you must click on the word—not the box adjacent to—"limits."

It may be advisable to limit searches to "English" unless you are fluent in another language. Note, however, that the abstracts frequently will be available in English, even if the entire article is not, and the abstract may provide enough information for your purposes.

PubMed now features a search parameter that limits results to exclusively human studies, or animal studies, if desired. If you are using another interface without this feature, use the search field called "MeSH Terms" or "MeSH Headings." If you are interested in locating descriptions of experiments on specific types of animals, you can enter these in the "MeSH Terms/

Headings" field. It is best to enter them as single (not plural) terms, e.g., "mouse," not "mice." If you want information specifically on human trials, enter "clinical" as a MeSH term.

To locate descriptions of experiments performed at a particular place such as a university, try entering the name of the facility in the "Affiliation" field. This will not guarantee that all the results returned detail experiments performed at that locale, but it will narrow it down considerably.

Another useful feature of the PubMed Medline is the Journal Browser. Select this from PubMed's home page to determine the official abbreviations for full journal titles or vice versa. This can be very useful, as most citations use only the abbreviations while the title of the journal is usually listed in full with the articles it contains.

You may also wish to visit <<http://igm.nlm.nih.gov/>> to search the Medline database. This site also provides links to helpful advice on using Medline and other search tools.

Another site with helpful hints is <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/pubmedhelp.html>>.

SAMPLE FOIA REQUEST LETTER 2

[Organization's Letterhead]

[Date]

Freedom of Information Act Officer

[Institution]

[Address]

[FOIA request #] (Select a number to keep track of your requests. You can use the date and any number of your choosing, as in 05-15-00 01.)

Dear Sir or Madam,

This request for records is made under the federal Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552.

[Name of your organization] is a nonprofit organization based in [city], dedicated to educating the public about animal protection issues. [Name of organization] may hereafter be referred to as "the requester."

This request pertains to [list experiment, research paper, institution, etc.] and includes, but is not limited to, the following records: [tailor your request to the materials you think you will need: grant proposals, annual reports, inspection reports, IACUC reports, correspondence, and any documents that show cost].

If any of the records or documents described above are considered to be exempt from release, please segregate and provide access to non-exempt portions, and justify deletions by reference to specific exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act.

The requester is prepared to pay all reasonable search and duplication fees up to an initial amount of [select a reasonable amount, e.g., \$25.00]. However, the Freedom of Information Act provides that: "Documents shall be furnished without charge or at a reduced charge where the agency determines that waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public" (5 U.S.C. Sec. 552 (a) (4) (9A)).

The requester believes that this request satisfies the criteria for fee waiver or reduction:

1. The requester is a nonprofit, public interest organization whose tax exempt number is [number].
2. The use of live animals in research has historically been a matter of wide public interest.
3. The disclosure of the requested records would not be to the primary benefit of the requester, but would be to the primary benefit of the general public. The requester has demonstrated its ability to disseminate to the general public the information it acquires. This is achieved by [give examples of newsletters, other publications, and media contacts].

Therefore, the requester asks that any search and duplication fees in this case be waived or reduced. If the waiver or reduction is denied and the fees will exceed [previously selected dollar amount], please notify the requester by telephone before the request is processed so that the requester may decide whether to pay the fee or appeal the denial of the request for waiver or reduction.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to receiving your reply within ten business days.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Typed Name]

[Title]

[Phone number]

[FOIA request #] (repeat the number given above)

Supportive Documentation

Don't forget to keep copies of all correspondence and notes of phone conversations. Once you have gathered detailed information on a particular study and would like to have it reviewed by experts, PCRM may be able to help. Contact us at:

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

5100 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 404
Washington, DC 20016
Phone: 202-686-2210 • Fax: 202-686-2216
pcrm@pcrm.org
<<http://www.pcrm.org>>

In addition to experts, you may wish to contact people who are said to benefit from such research to learn if they would indeed find such data useful, or if they approve of the practices you have exposed. This could include people affected by the disease which is being studied and physicians who care for them. You might discover some alternatives which prove more useful than the animal research being conducted.

Also notify congressional representatives, senators, and pertinent congressional committees. Your members of Congress can often obtain additional information that may be difficult for you to access directly. The League of Women Voters publishes a congressional directory listing all of the representatives by state and district. To find out the names and phone numbers of representatives, check for a local branch of the League in your town or contact them at:

League of Women Voters

1730 M St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-429-1965
lwv@lwv.org
<<http://www.lwv.org>>

Animals in Education

Animals are sometimes used in classes at universities and medical or veterinary schools. Information can be obtained by writing or calling the relevant department or by contacting students. Alumni of the school can be very helpful, as well. A syllabus or protocol from the particular curriculum may provide listings of the numbers and types of animals used. Inquire whether alternatives to the laboratories are available. If so, ask if students are notified about the alternatives at the beginning of the course. PCRM compiles information on animal use at medical schools for the benefit of prospective students, so please let us know of any new information you may receive. PCRM also provides information about alternatives to medical students and faculty, as well as copies of our video, *Advances in Medical Education, with Henry Heimlich, M.D.*

If animals are being used in high school or elementary school classes, inquire how many animals are used and whether the laboratories are mandatory. Information on students' rights can

be obtained by contacting the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF):

Animal Legal Defense Fund

127 Fourth St.
Petaluma, CA 94952
Phone: 707-769-7771 • Fax: 707-769-0785
info@aldf.org
<<http://www.aldf.org>>

Also useful is the Dissection Hotline at 1-800-922-FROG. Call this number if you are a high school student faced with a dissection course. PCRM can provide free copies of our dissection fact sheets.

BRINGING IN THE LAW

Local Authorities

If you discover violations of state or county law, contact local enforcement agencies, such as the sheriff's office or police department, magistrate or district attorney, animal control officer, and/or humane society or animal shelter. Provide them with a written statement/affidavit of your observations. Professional opinions will help your case, so try to gather any relevant expert critiques before presenting your findings.

To help you with this step, consider enlisting the aid of some local influential citizens, such as council members or school superintendents. They can help ensure that the material you are presenting is given the prompt and careful attention it deserves.

Local Animal Protection Organizations

Animal protection organizations in your area may know what, if anything, is being done on a particular case. They may have suggestions for a plan of action and may provide other types of assistance.

Once you have learned about research on animals conducted in your area, make this information available to others. Remember that the Freedom of Information offices assume that you will do this with the material they give you.

SPREADING THE WORD

Don't keep silent. Circulate petitions and organize table displays. Always have a specific "what you can do" angle. Present your information to appropriate special interest groups who can help spread the word. For example, ferret clubs may commit time and resources towards stopping ferret head injury studies. Focus on three basic areas: what is happening now, what can be done about it, and what should be happening instead.

IN CONCLUSION

Kee in mind that you provide the funds for research, as a taxpayer and a contributor to foundations, and that you have a right to know the details. Share what you know with others, and, above all, make your opinions known.