



PRESS RELEASE

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CAMPAIGNERS WIN KEY ANIMAL TEST FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COURT VICTORY

Tribunal rules Government's cover-up of animal experiment information is against law

The Government has been unlawfully withholding the details of the animal experiments it licenses in the UK, according to a key ruling from the Information Tribunal released today.

The case was brought by the BUAV after the Home Office refused to reveal basic information about animal experiment licences the organisation had applied for under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI). It attempted to argue that only the information which researchers applying for such licences chose to publish in summaries could be released.

The basic information asked for by the BUAV covers the purpose of the experiment, what is to be done to the animals, how the applicant intended to limit animal suffering and, crucially, how they proved it was essential they used animals rather than alternatives in their proposed experiments. The BUAV is not and has never been interested in information that identifies who is or was involved or where the research is or has taken place.

The decision means that far more information about what is done to lab animals and for what purpose - and about consideration of non-animal alternatives - will have to be disclosed by the Government. The cover-up of this information prevents informed public debate about the controversial area of animal experiments and, as the Home Office candidly accepted at the hearing, it means the Government cannot be held to account.

The ruling is a key victory in the BUAV's campaign to get the Government to abide by the FOI law and be open and transparent about animal experiments. It follows victory in the judicial review it brought against the Government last year when a High Court Judge ruled the Government had been unlawfully licensing animal experiments at Cambridge University.

The organisation first asked for the licence information of five separate applications as a FOI test case soon after the Act came into force in January 2005. The Government had attempted to fudge its duty to release information so far by releasing 'summaries' of the licence information spun for public consumption. The tribunal agreed with the BUAV that such summaries are biased towards emphasising the positive aspects of the research and

said they amounted to creating a “perception of a positive spin”. The BUAV argues this inevitably means any negative aspects such as animal suffering are downplayed.

‘This is not just a victory for the BUAV – this is a victory for the British public who expect to access honest and open information about the nature of animal experiments that take place in the UK. The Home Office’s repeated refusal to release basic non-confidential information about animal experiments just goes to further prove they are afraid of how the public will react if they are given real information about what actually happens to animals in UK laboratories, often at tax payers expense,’ said BUAV chief executive Michelle Thew.

The Home Office has been directed by the Tribunal to conduct a proper analysis of what is, and what is not confidential within the licence applications in question following the ruling.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITOR

The decision of the Information Tribunal was released at 12 noon today following a hearing which took place on 17th December at the Finance and Tax Tribunal, 15-19 Bedford Avenue, London WC1. The BUAV was represented by Daniel Alexander QC. BUAV chief executive Michelle Thew is available for interview.

68 per cent of people in the UK would like to live in a world where no-one wants or believes we need to experiment on animals, according to a poll carried out earlier this year on behalf of the BUAV by independent research group NFP Synergy (www.nfpsynergy.com)

76 per cent of the British public think the Government should, as a matter of principle, prohibit experiments on any live animals which cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm in a TNS national opinion poll commissioned by the BUAV in 2003.

The BUAV has been campaigning for over 100 years to achieve a world where nobody wants or believes we need to experiment on animals. We are committed to achieving our aims through reliable and reasoned evidence-based debate. We are proudly non-violent and respect the quality of life for all – animals and people.

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