



PRESS RELEASE (July 7th 2008)

Animal campaigners renew call to end primate testing in Europe following shocking evidence of animal suffering

The BUAV has today renewed its call for an urgent ban on the use of primates in European laboratories in response to evidence of widespread cruelty in the trade in wild primates from Tanzania, uncovered and reported by the Sunday Times newspaper.

The BUAV is also renewing its call to governments such as Tanzania to protect its indigenous populations of primates and put an end to this unacceptable suffering.

The BUAV has led the campaign to end the international trade in primates for research, and has itself carried out a number of investigations of the primate trade in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean – a trade in pain, suffering and death on a massive scale. Findings such as the high mortality rates of monkeys captured in the wild, the cruelty inflicted during the trapping process and the appalling conditions at holding centres where monkeys were kept prior to export led to the UK government implementing a ban on the use of wild caught primates in UK laboratories a decade ago.

The BUAV leads the European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE), which is at the forefront of the campaign to seek a ban on the use of primates in research across Europe. The European Commission is currently proposing revisions to the out-of-date Directive 86/609, which governs animal research across the EU. A key sticking point is the area of primates, where it is universally recognised that the existing provisions are woefully inadequate. In its response to a call from a clear majority of MEPs to include a timetable for ending primate tests in the new Directive, the Commission concluded (1) that to do so is the “ultimate goal”, but that “this goal can only be achieved with a vision, close co-operation and combined effort of all concerned.”

There are no legal requirements in the European Union for primates to be used in any kind of research, but the latest statistics from the EU report that over 10,000 primates are used in laboratories every year (2). Contrary to popular perception, the vast majority (66%) of these primates are not used in research into human diseases but rather toxicology tests. There have been considerable moves over recent years however, to challenge the necessity of primates as a second species in medicines safety testing (3) and just last year an announcement that acute toxicity testing (which can involve primates) is actually redundant (4).

The Chief Executive of the BUAV, Michelle Thew says "These findings are yet further evidence of the appalling cruelty and suffering that is inflicted upon primates for the research industry. These highly intelligent and social animals are ripped from their native habitat and family groups, and incarcerated in appalling conditions before being shipped around the world to endure more suffering as research tools in laboratories. We have a unique and historic opportunity under the review of the European Directive 86/609 to get a long overdue ban on the use of primates in experiments across Europe and put an end to this cruelty."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

(1) www.rds-online.org.uk/upload/docs/DCL-0040-2007%20EN.DOC

(2) Fifth Report on the Statistics on the Number of Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes in the Member States of the European Union. {COM (2007) 675 final}

(3)

'NC3Rs/ABPI strategy' See NC3Rs website:

<http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/trackdoc.asp?id=322&pid=207>

(4)

NC3Rs paper; Robinson, A., et al. C (2008) A European pharmaceutical

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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