



*Integrating
the Life Sciences
from Molecule to
Organism*

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The American Physiological Society

9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3991 (USA)

October 23, 2006

The Honorable Terry Whittington, Chair
The Honorable Frank Grimes, Vice Chair
The Honorable Michael Hargrave
The Honorable Lou Kalinowski
The Honorable Bill Rhode
The Honorable Josh Reid
The Honorable Tom Hoag
Gladwin County Board of Commissioners
401 W. Cedar Ave.
Gladwin, MI 48624

Dear Commissioners:

The American Physiological Society (APS) urges you to reconsider your county's ban on releasing pound animals to Class B Dealers and medical research labs. The APS is a professional association dedicated to advancing the study of physiological processes that sustain life. The APS was founded in 1887 and today has nearly 11,000 member scientists working in all 50 states.

Animals that would otherwise be euthanized can play a vital role in medical discovery and thus improve the lives of both humans and pet animals. The American Veterinary Medical Association has stated that "the carefully controlled use of random-source dogs and cats contributes greatly to improving the health and welfare of both animals and human beings." Dogs and cats have served as research models of many diseases, and have been particularly important in the study of cardiovascular, digestive, musculoskeletal, neurological diseases, as well as lymphoma and breast cancer.

Those who are opposed to allowing pound animals scheduled for euthanasia to be released for research say that purpose-bred animals are better suited to research. However, purpose-bred animals are young and genetically inbred. These traits are ideal for some kinds of research, but not for other kinds. In some research, inbreeding can lead to skewed results because of shared traits among the subjects. In addition, in cardiovascular research, anatomical variation is necessary to simulate the variation seen in the human population. Virtually all drugs, devices, and surgeries for heart disease were developed or tested at some point in random-source dogs.

Age is also an important consideration. Many diseases that affect humans as they age also develop in aging dogs and cats, including type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, arthritis, and heart disease. This parallel makes older animals the logical model of choice for studying and developing treatments for these diseases. However, older animals are not available from breeders. They are only available through pounds, shelters, and Class B dealers.

In addition to addressing human illness, random-source animals are essential to veterinary research. Medications meant for older animals should be tested in older animals to ensure their safety. One drug, Deramaxx, which is intended to treat pain and inflammation mostly seen in older dogs, exemplifies this need. It was only tested in young, healthy dogs. Consequently, older dogs given the drug suffered from unanticipated side effects, resulting in the death of hundreds of pets and serious illness in thousands of others. This harm might have been averted if the medication was tested in older animals; however, such safety tests become more difficult as animal rights activists limit medical researchers' access to older animals.

Contrary to activists' claims of ill treatment, researchers do all they can to ensure that research animals are treated well. Researchers care about animals as feeling creatures, and they recognize that good animal care is essential to good science. Furthermore, research with animals is overseen by many different organizations including the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Public Health Service, each research institution's internal Animal Care and Use Committee, and, in most cases, the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care. These organizations make sure that animals are treated humanely. Consequently, the citizens of Gladwin County can rest assured that animals released for medical research will be treated with care and will contribute to the advancement of human and veterinary medicine. Therefore, I urge you to reverse your previous decision and to permit pound animals to be released for research once again.

Please feel free to contact Alice Ra'anan, the APS Director of Government Relations and Science Policy, at 301-634-7105 or araan@the-aps.org if you have any question about this matter.

Sincerely,

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Dale J. Benos, Ph.D.
President