

# Military Animal Research

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Animal experimentation is a difficult issue to confront. Estimates put the annual death toll due to experimentation near 20,000,000 per year in the U.S.

There are almost as many different kinds of experimentation as there are laboratories. Animals are dying in projects involving drug addiction, brain mapping, infectious diseases, and many other areas of "scientific curiosity" every minute of every day. If we are to confront this issue, where do we start?

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) experiments extensively on a wide range of species. There are currently 34 (DOD) labs worldwide, with four outside the U.S. During Fiscal Year 1999 DOD reports experimenting on 327,097 animals, a 12% increase over the previous year. 187,257 animals die in actual DOD labs, and 139,840 suffer in non-DOD labs funded by DOD contracts. Most (80%) of these animals are experimented on by the Army, the Air Force using 8%, the Navy using 3%, and unaffiliated DOD labs using 9.3%

Experiments funded by the Department of Defense are typically more invasive than projects funded by other sources. Your local university may be doing some gruesome projects, but they are likely not subjecting animals to chemical weapons, ionizing radiation, lasers, high power microwaves, and biological weapons. DOD experiments do all of these things. One way to objectively measure the invasiveness of experimentation is to look at the percentage of animals used in painful experimentation without benefit of pain relievers. Using USDA national figures, 9% of animals suffer without pain relievers in experimentation. Fifteen percent of the animals experimented on in military projects (intramural and extramural) suffer without benefit of pain relievers. The numbers become even worse when looking within actual DOD labs, where fully 18.2% of the animals are used in painful experiments without anesthesia.

There is one other major difference between DOD facilities and more typical laboratories. The facilities at the university, hospital, or private research foundation in your city are required to be inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture/Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS). However, this is not true of DOD labs. USDA/APHIS does not have the authority to inspect laboratories owned by the federal government. Therefore, DOD labs (as well as those of NASA, Department of Energy, etc.) receive

very little in the way of outside supervision. The primary sources of information on military experimentation are two Internet accessible sites:

Department of Defense: Animal Use, provides access to the annual reports that the DOD files with Congress.

Department of Defense: DOD Biomedical Research, provides access to the DOD Biomedical Research Database. This is a searchable database that catalogues all animal experiments funded by the DOD. This database contains one-page summaries of DOD experiments including information such as species, performing organization, funding amount, etc.

One laboratory within the DOD illustrates what is done on a larger scale throughout the entirety of military experimentation. The Air Force Research Laboratory located on Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, is a good example of what military labs and experiments are like.

A recent (fiscal 1997) USDA animal use report for Brooks discloses the use of about 300 primates per year, with a separate primate colony maintained at 297. This report also discloses the use of 69 primates in painful experimentation without benefit of anesthesia. The experiment these primates endured involved "standard operant conditioning techniques using negative reinforcement." Thirty-two pigs are also listed as experiencing painful experimentation without benefit of anesthesia. These pigs are evidently subjected to high gravitational forces - sufficient enough to cause loss of consciousness.

Utilizing the DOD database listed above, while searching on Brooks as the performing institution, brings up 14 separate projects at Brooks. Twelve of these projects bring \$4,845,000 into the till for Brooks. The funding amounts for the other two are listed as "classified." Of these 14 experiments, 10 involve primates, and the rest use rats, mice, or other rodent species. The 10 experiments that involve primates are highly invasive. The "subjects" of these projects must endure laser effects on the eyes, radiation, and high-power microwaves.

The primates in the labs at Brooks have not fared well over the years. Necropsy reports (post-mortems) reveal conditions indicating inadequate care. Many of the primates for whom documentation was available are listed as having little to no body fat. The lack of body fat indicates an animal that has endured a serious illness, or a long-term debilitating condition. Often the primates are simply listed as found dead at the morning cage check. Pathological conditions serious enough to cause death do not occur instantaneously. However, the necropsy reports often mention nothing in the way of treatment for these pathological conditions. Parasites are common in many of the primates. Conditions like

gastric bloat, pneumonia, and chronic wasting conditions are also common.

The life stories of many of these primates are truly sad. They reveal (in several instances) early exposures to radiation (often dating back to the 1960s), with the primates surviving in laboratories well into the 1990s. They survive everything from amputation of fingers, arthritis, hemorrhoids, severe chronic diarrhea, etc. These unfortunate animals live for decades with the stress of confinement and after effects of radiation studies, and eventually succumb after a lifetime of confinement and victimization.

The DOD is currently experimenting on 1,877 (FY 1999) primates every year. And primate use within the DOD is rising, up by 350 since 1997. On average, the DOD kills 5 primates daily.

There have already been two separate sets of Congressional investigative hearings to investigate military animal experimentation. The Internet available information listed above is one result of those hearings. These data were made available to the public to give us a better idea of what happens in military laboratories. Now that we can find out what happens in military labs, it is time to do something about it. The membership lists and the mailing addresses for both the House & Senate Armed Services Committee are listed below. Please write to these legislators and ask them for the following:

A new set of congressional investigative hearings on military animal experimentation.

A delineated plan for the phasing out of military experimentation, especially in areas of medical training, radiation research, and chemical and biological weapons.

Outside review of animal care in military facilities, with specific attention to primates' social and behavior needs.

Delineated plan for the reduction of painful experimentation without benefit of anesthesia in all DOD funded experiments.

Address for Senators  
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Address for Representatives  
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Mr. Budkie is Director of SAEN, an animal advocacy organization.

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