

November 2006

Dear Member of European Parliament,

Written Declaration 64/2006 - steps to end experiments on primates

As more and more has become known about the sentience and the capacity of primates to suffer greatly in experiments, there have been increased global calls for their protection.

Last year, Dr Jane Goodall and 25 animal protection groups attending the Fifth World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences made a declaration calling for international steps to end the use of primates in research. Known as the Berlin Declaration, this now has the backing of over 100 animal protection groups and states:

“Animal protection organisations and scientists have united to call for an end to the use of non-human primates in biomedical research and testing. We urge governments, regulators, industry, scientists and research funders worldwide to accept the need to end primate use as a legitimate and essential goal; to make achieving this goal a high priority; and work together to facilitate this. In particular, we believe there must be an immediate, internationally co-ordinated effort to bring all non-human primate experiments to an end.”

Currently an estimated 10,000 primates are experimented on in EU member states. Written Declaration 64/2006 currently before the European Parliament recognises that the revision of Directive 86/609 provides an opportunity to end experiments on these animals:

“Urges the Commission to propose an end to all non-human primate experiments in the revision process of Directive 86/609 EC on the use of animals in scientific procedures, specifically: to prohibit chimpanzee experiments and the use of wild-caught primates in the EU and phase out all non-human primate experiments in the EU over the next 6 years.”

Some people might argue that in the case of scientific research the similarities between ourselves and the other primates justify their use in experiments. We believe that this argument fails on both scientific and moral grounds.

Nature itself presents a richness of diversity that has been created by small percentages of divergence in DNA. In biomedical research, these key differences often at the cellular level, make a world of difference when extrapolating the results from animal tests to humans. This makes laboratory animal results misleading as

predictors of likely human response. Moreover, our closeness to the other primates means that we can comprehend their suffering – it does not make them laboratory-sized people.

In the UK earlier this year, a trial for the experimental drug TGN1412 went tragically wrong, with patients made seriously ill after taking doses of the drug which were 500 times *lower* than those given to laboratory primates. Such incidents serve to highlight the unreliable nature of animal testing. Perhaps even more tragically, this human suffering could have been avoided if a reliable non-animal method such as micro-dosing had been used instead.

A move away from primate experiments is therefore not only an important humane step forward, but it is also in line with the use of modern scientific techniques such as micro-dosing (tiny doses of a drug analysed by accelerator mass spectrometry), tissue and cell culture, scanning techniques (such as fMRI – functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and MEG – Magnetoencephalography) which enable the accurate study of humans rather than animals.

The European Commission will make proposals for a revision of Directive 86/609 on the use of animals in experiments in the first quarter of 2007. This is an opportunity to make a huge leap forward for science as well as protection of our primate cousins.

We believe that **Written Declaration 64/2006** should be adopted by the Parliament to make clear to both the Council and the Commission that the Parliament wants to see **a planned end to the use of primates in experiments**.

I urge you to please sign declaration 64/2006 and allow the EU to take an important ethical and scientific step forward for humans as well as the other primate nations. You can find the Declaration in front of the hemicycle in Strasbourg or in the room PHS 2A019 in Brussels.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Creamer', with a horizontal line underneath.

Jan Creamer
Chief Executive