

801 Old York Road, Suite 204  
Jenkintown, PA 19046-1685  
Tel: 215.887.0816  
Fax: 215.887.2088  
www.aavs.org  
aavsonline@aol.com



## N E W S   R E L E A S E

Contacts:  
Nancy Blaney  
Coordinator, Working Group to Preserve the Animal Welfare Act  
(703) 521-1689

Tina Nelson  
Executive Director, American Anti-Vivisection Society  
(215) 887-0816

### **Farm Bill Amendment Weakens Animal Welfare Act To Exclude Most Animals Used in Labs from Humane Protection; Coalition Urges Defeat**

Washington, DC -- Today Congress will come one step closer to making the U.S. the only country with animal protection laws to exclude most research animals from the protection of the law. The Conference Report to the Farm Bill, which the House will consider today, includes an amendment offered by Senator Helms that denies the Animal Welfare Act's (AWA) requirements for humane care to 95% of research animals, i.e., birds, rats, and mice, from receiving humane care. Instead of using hearings and debates before making a significant and controversial change to the AWA, Senator Helms introduced an amendment that passed in the Senate by voice vote with only a few members present. This amendment is now part of the Farm Bill.

One of the reasons Congress broadened the AWA in 1970 was to stop the widespread abuse of animals used by researchers. The AWA requires researchers to provide humane care and consider nonanimal alternatives for warm-blooded animals used in research. To ensure that these standards are met, USDA has the enforcement power to inspect research facilities.

A majority of scientists and many scientific organizations support AWA coverage for birds, rats, and mice, recognizing that good animal care is essential to good science.

As a result of this undebated amendment, there is no legal duty for anyone who uses birds, rats, and mice in research to treat them with humane care. Within the past few months, reports of abuse of these species in research facilities have proliferated, including several incidents at the University of North Carolina. At this University, an undercover investigator documented repeated animal welfare violations involving these animals.

It is critical that birds, rats, and mice remain protected under the AWA. Otherwise, there will be no standards of care, no requirement to consider nonanimal alternatives, and no enforcement mechanism to prevent these violations from occurring. There will, however, be grave consequences for the quality of science and for the credibility of the United States within the worldwide research community.

Nancy Blaney, Coordinator of the Working Group to Preserve the AWA, a coalition of animal protection organizations, stated, "Clearly the National Association for Biomedical Research, which pushed this amendment, doesn't want USDA to see what is happening to these species in the nation's laboratories. What are they hiding?"

Tina Nelson, Executive Director of the American Anti-Vivisection Society, stated, "We urge Congress not to approve the farm bill with the Helms Amendment. This unconscionable amendment is a disaster for 20 million research animals now permanently excluded from the very basic standards of humane care and treatment established under the AWA. This may very well damage the reputation of U.S. laboratories among researchers throughout the world."

The Working Group to Preserve the Animal Welfare Act consists of the following organizations: Alternatives Research & Development Foundation, American Anti-Vivisection Society, American Humane Association, Doris Day Animal League, Humane Society of the United States, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Society for Animal Protective Legislation.

####