

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

For Immediate Release:
February 9, 2001

Contacts: Tina Nelson, Executive Director
Crystal Miller, Outreach Director
(215) 887-0816

WHY DOES OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CELEBRATE ANIMAL PAIN, SUFFERING AND DEATH?

JENKINTOWN, PA—The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) expressed outrage today over the federal government's celebration of the 500th study of chemicals' effects upon rats and mice. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' (NIEHS) National Toxicology Program (NTP) recently hailed its 500th "landmark" two-year study from a long series of experiments that inherently cause the pain, suffering, and death of hundreds of thousands of rats and mice.

To study the effects of Naphthalene in its 500th study, NTP used 391 rats that were exposed to various concentrations of the chemical for five days per week for two years. This, however, was not the first study conducted using this chemical. In their 410th study, NTP had used 600 mice to test Naphthalene for the same effects that its most recent study sought.

Results from the earlier study were questionable, because more of the male mice in the control group (*i.e.*, those not exposed to the chemical) died than those males that were exposed to the chemical. Researchers attributed the high death rate in the male control group to "wound trauma and secondary infections" resulting from fighting amongst group-housed males. Death from secondary infection suggests a lack of appropriate medical care and supervision over the animals used in this research, both failures of basic animal husbandry techniques.

The NTP states that rodents are used primarily because they are cheap to keep and breed. The use of rodents in NTP research is self-regulated under National Institutes of Health Guidelines and not subject to unannounced inspections or outside accountability. Rats and mice, however, are *not* covered by our nation's Animal Welfare Act (AWA), which is enforced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Because rats and mice constitute over 90 percent of the animals used in research, the AWA really only covers less than ten percent of animals in research. "Because there are no legal consequences for substandard research using rodents, research failures like study number 410 can continue," said Tina Nelson, AAVS Executive Director. "This illustrates the urgency for regulations under the AWA to protect rodents."

While government funded researchers are encouraged to consider using alternatives to animals, there is much more authority to emphasize the use of alternatives to animals covered by the AWA. "We urge the NTP and other researchers to validate non-animal methods of conducting research intended to benefit humans," said Nelson. "Rather than consider this grueling series of studies a success, a 500th NTP study using alternative methods to animals would really be something to celebrate."

The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) is a non-profit animal advocacy and educational organization dedicated to ending experiments on animals in research, testing, dissection, and education. Founded in 1883, AAVS is the oldest organization in the United States dedicated to eliminating experiments on animals. AAVS pursues its objectives through legal and effective advocacy, education, and development of alternative methods.

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