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Contacts:

Nancy Blaney

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

Chris Heyde

Policy Analyst, Society for Animal Protective Legislation  
202-337-2334

### **Coalition Urges Senate to Defeat Farm Bill that will Weaken Animal Welfare Act**

(Washington, DC) The Working Group to Preserve the Animal Welfare Act has strongly criticized the U.S. House of Representatives for passing the farm bill conference report on Thursday, May 2, because of a provision making the U.S. the only country with animal protection laws to exclude most animals used in research from the protection of the law.

The Conference Report to the Farm Bill includes an amendment offered by Senator Helms that denies the Animal Welfare Act's (AWA) very basic requirements for humane care to 95 percent of research animals, i.e., birds, rats, and mice. Instead of using hearings and debates before making a significant and controversial change to the AWA, Senator Helms brought the amendment before the Senate for a voice vote when very few Senators were present on the floor. That 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 to research animals and consider nonanimal alternatives. To ensure that these standards are met, USDA has the enforcement power to inspect research facilities; no other government agency has such authority.

The Helms amendment ignores the fact that a majority of scientists, many scientific organizations, and corporations involved in research and testing, such as Proctor & Gamble and Colgate-Palmolive, all 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 humanely. 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

investigator documented repeated animal welfare violations involving these species. Problems have also surfaced at Johns Hopkins University, the University of Connecticut, and the University of California/San Francisco.

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.

According to Christine Stevens, Secretary of the Society for Animal Protective Legisla-tion, "The National Association for Biomedical Research, an organization developed by the industry that profits from the sale of animals for use in laboratories, was the inspiration behind Senator Helm's amendment. NABR doesn't want the USDA or the American public to see what is happening to these animals in the nation's laboratories. As the reports of abuses clearly indicate, they have a great deal to hide."

Nancy Blaney, Coordinator of the Working Group to Preserve the Animal Welfare Act, a coalition of several major national animal protection organizations, 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 includes the following groups: Alternatives Research & Development Foundation, American Anti-Vivisection Society, American Humane Association, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 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.