

Animal Research Study Nears End

4 groups created to investigate claims

By JEFF SILVER
Assistant University Editor

UNC officials are working to complete an investigation of animal research protocol ordered by the National Institutes of Health this summer and are confident the organization will notice improvement.

The internal investigation was ordered by the NIH after People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals filed a formal complaint with the agency in April. At that time, PETA released a video shot by an investigator showing workers allegedly mistreating mice and rats at laboratories at the Thurston Bowles Building.

The investigation report is due Sept. 13, according to the NIH. The NIH originally set an August deadline, but UNC was given an extension because University labs were subject to several inspections throughout the summer, UNC officials said.

Lester Kwock, chairman of UNC's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, said the committee already has compiled a nearly 100-page report. He said officials are working on answering a 12-page list of questions sent by the NIH.

The NIH is declining comment until the investigation is closed.

IACUC has formed four subcommittees to look into the allegations.

One of these will look into specific problems highlighted in the video. Another is examining euthanasia procedures because parts of the tape showed lab workers allegedly violating euthanasia protocol. The third subcommittee is evaluating the Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine, whose jobs include coordinating veterinary care for laboratory animals. The fourth will compare UNC's policies to peer institutions and laboratories of similar size.

Kwock acknowledged that the IACUC has had problems in the past, saying the committee's policies granted too much leeway to individual researchers.

But he said changes in written rules specifically denote what is allowed when

using animals. "It's not going to be 'do what you want to do,'" Kwock said.

Tony Waldrop, UNC vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, said he commissioned three national experts to evaluate UNC's procedures to gain an outside perspective on University protocol.

Kwock said all three are former members of the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care.

"They are individuals who are highly viewed by the NIH and AAALAC," Waldrop said.

But PETA spokeswoman Mary Beth Sweetland said her organization is not satisfied with the University's response. She disputed the claim that input from outside experts brought in by Waldrop will help. "Usually their report ends up being far more of a smoke screen and a justification than it does a setting right of things," Sweetland said.

Waldrop said UNC labs have made considerable improvements to animal treatment since the spring, saying UNC officials received positive feedback from AAALAC inspectors who visited campus labs throughout the summer.

"Looking into the allegations is going quite well," Waldrop said.

But Sweetland said positive feedback from the accreditation agency does not necessarily demonstrate progress.

"AAALAC is an apologist for labs. Everyone knows that - it's not much of a secret," Sweetland said. "The organization itself is a mouthpiece for the industry."

Since the allegations first came out, UNC has closed two facilities for renovation: a floor in the Glaxo building and the entire Burnett-Womack building.

Neither will house animals when they reopen.

Kwock said each location was cited by AAALAC members in their summer visit as deficient. Both have been problems in the past and have been subject to numerous stopgap changes.

The University Editor can be reached at udek@unc.edu.

SWINGIN' STRINGS



DTH/KIMBERLY CRAVEN

Luluk of Luluk Purwanto and the Helsdingen Trio plays the violin in the Olde Campus Upper Quad on Monday. The jazz group's performance at UNC was one of 42 at campuses around the nation.

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Airports Ask for Time

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Managers of 133 airports that handle three-fourths of the nation's air travelers asked the Senate on Monday to extend the year-end deadline for screening all luggage for bombs.

The airport managers signed a letter saying the Transportation Security Administration can't buy, install and operate the baggage-screening equipment by the cutoff date without creating major air traffic problems.

"The 2002 deadline is an arbitrary deadline that cannot be met at many U.S. airports without serious implications to security, customer service, airport facilities, passengers' willingness to travel and, ultimately, the national economy," the letter said.

Congress may extend the deadline, which it set as part of security legislation after Sept. 11. The House last month

voted 217-211 to move it back by a year. A Senate committee will consider the idea when lawmakers return from their summer vacation in September.

The TSA said the agency is making every effort to meet the deadline, but may be stymied because Congress cut its request for \$4.4 billion to \$3.85 billion.

"We're back looking at our books seeing what we can do," said TSA spokeswoman Heather Rosenker.

Earlier this month the Transportation Department's inspector general questioned whether enough machines could be produced and enough employees hired to operate them in time.

Kevin Cox, senior executive vice president at Dallas/Fort Worth Airport, predicted three-hour waits if the deadline isn't extended.

"We know what it's going to do to our airports, and it's not what the traveling public expects on Jan. 1," Cox said.

AUDITION!

Apollo Theater Amateur Night

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 5th
at the FPG Student Union

The Carolina Union is hosting Apollo Theater Amateur Night as a part of the 2002-2003 Performing Arts Series. The performance will be held OCTOBER 25th in Carmichael Auditorium. Prior to the show, auditions will be held on SEPTEMBER 5th. The winner of the performance will receive \$1000 and the opportunity to compete on the Apollo Theater stage as part of Amateur Night in Harlem. Those wishing to audition for the show should call the number below no later than Tuesday, September 3rd for registration material.

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