

MARCH 19, 2013

**PETA CLAIMS IGNORE REPORT'S VERDICT ON ANIMAL CARE
RESPONSE TO PETA THERMAL INJURY CLAIMS**

During a routine visit to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in December 2012, a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinary medical officer reviewed detailed animal records kept by university animal care staff for a group of cats serving as subjects in research aimed at improving treatment for people who depend on dual cochlear implants or hearing aids.

USDA's report on that inspection describes an account of a burn received by one cat and infections among others, as well as the prompt discovery and aggressive treatment of those medical conditions by the UW–Madison veterinarians who provide regular observation and care to the cats.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals made light of the report as confirmation of PETA's allegations of mistreatment, yet again misrepresenting the USDA's conclusions.

UW–Madison was cited after a cat was burned during surgery. To keep the cat warm during the procedure, researchers had placed warmed bags of fluid next to the cat, which was also covered with a blanket. A chemical hand warmer used to heat the warming bags slipped onto one of the cat's legs during the procedure. The hand warmer was discovered promptly and removed.

While no burn was apparent at the time, the researchers remained concerned about the possibility of injury, and the cat received intensive follow-up monitoring. Veterinarians did find an apparent burn after several days, and the animal was treated promptly with pain medication, antibiotics, IV fluids and bandaging.

The cat recovered fully from the injury.

In the USDA citation — which has been available on UW–Madison's animal research information website, animalresearch.wisc.edu, for weeks — the officer acknowledged the researchers' immediate response. The citation also notes the treatment the animal received and that — before the citation was issued— the university established procedures to prevent reoccurrence of similar injuries and retraining in anesthesia and animal handling procedures.

No such citations were issued for infections incurred by cats. Over the course of many years of research, nine cats included in the studies developed infections associated with the placement of wires and implants used to study eye movement and the way the cats identify the source of sounds.

Again, USDA inspectors noted these infections based on the detailed records kept by UW–Madison veterinarians. In each case, as also noted by USDA, the infections were identified and treated quickly and aggressively by veterinarians.

One cat, however, developed an eye infection serious enough to require removal of the eye. Another cat developed infections that did not respond to treatment and was euthanized.

UW–Madison regrets that these animals were injured during the course of our research. Our scientists and veterinarians maintain high standards of care for the animals in our research programs.

As in any endeavor, on rare occasions there are unanticipated events. When this occurs, the university's expert animal care staff takes action to address the problem and evaluate changes to minimize risk of future accidents or errors. The USDA's report describes the cats at the time of their December visit exhibiting good health, with no sign of infection and appearing alert, responsive and interactive.

###