



MEDIA RELEASE

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UFAW MAKES AWARD TO ADVANCE THE 3RS

Charity supports study to gain appreciation of welfare issues faced by laboratory primates and learn more about indicators of poor welfare

UFAW is pleased to announce that it has awarded a grant to Professor Georgia Mason of the University of Guelph to assist her three year project investigating potential indicators of cumulative welfare in laboratory primates including stereotypic behaviour, self-injurious behaviour and depression-like inactivity.

The study, which has been co-written by PhD student Andrea Polanco, will involve learning about depression-like inactivity, self-injurious behaviour and stereotypic behaviour in rhesus monkeys kept in research facilities as indicators of cumulative poor welfare; and will examine whether there are types of rearing environment, temperament or housing that make monkeys more or less resilient. UFAW's grant, which is given to facilitate the Replacement, Refinement or Reduction of the use of animals in scientific research or testing, will help with the final phase of the project, and enable travel to a primate centre in the USA to take live (via CCTV) behavioural observations, spend 10-12 weeks at the location and finalise obtaining all life history data from each subject.

UFAW's Chief Executive and Scientific Director Dr Robert Hubrecht said: "This project addresses an important welfare issue. Primates used in fundamental research are often subjected to reuse or to multiple procedures and it is important to establish how a series of events, both positive and negative, might contribute to the animals' lifetime experience. This could be used to help evaluate the ethics of proposed research and identify areas that need refinement to reduce the welfare impact. The research might also reveal 'tipping points' which could be used to set humane endpoints. Professor Mason has access to a large number of records of the lifetime experience of primates in two US National primate centres which she can correlate with behavioural observations of individual animals. This will enable her and her team to understand which aspects of these research primates' life might pre-dispose them to developing poor welfare or perhaps even protect them.

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In setting out her project proposal, Professor Mason said: “Assessing the life-time well-being of research animals is important both practically and philosophically. The concept of lifetime welfare is central to policy-makers’ & welfare scientists’ discussions of “quality of life” and “lives worth living”. More concretely, European law now declares that in animal-based research, “the benefit of reusing animals should be balanced against any adverse effects on their welfare, taking into account the lifetime experience of the individual.”

Since its foundation in 1926 UFAW has worked to improve the welfare of animals used in research by supporting scientific studies to understand and improve their welfare alongside education and training to improve the lives of animals used for scientific purposes worldwide. It was whilst working for UFAW in the 1950s that William Russell and Rex Burch developed the concept of the 3Rs – Replacement, Reduction and Refinement and these principles are now broadly accepted as the framework under which research on animals should be conducted.

Professor Mason and her team will be working collaboratively with two NIH Primate Centres to facilitate the study. Once the project is complete, the findings will be widely shared to relevant groups via publication in appropriate journal(s) and presentation at suitable animal/primate conferences or symposia. Professor Mason’s group hope to use the findings to create clear, well-justified, practically useful guidelines for refinement, to be achieved via improved welfare assessment and identification of humane endpoints and refined housing regimes. These guidelines will be aimed at lab animal technicians, facility veterinarians, principal investigators, and all those charged with the ethical review of primate-based research, especially of rhesus monkeys. The work will also be presented to the technicians, veterinarians and primate-using scientists at the NIH Primate Centres involved.

-ENDS-

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Note to editors:

The 3Rs:

The 3Rs principles suggest that there are three ways to lessen the impact of scientific research on animals:

Replace animals with other ways of gaining the knowledge required (by using computer models, tissue culture, artificial organs etc. to understand biological processes)

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Reduce the number of animals used to achieve the results (for example by doing more efficient experiments which use fewer animals)

Refine the way animals are treated to minimise any impacts upon them (the aim being to cause less suffering to the animals or to improve their welfare whilst still achieving the scientific aims)

UFAW has supported developments in all of the 3Rs which have resulted in improvements to the welfare of millions of animals.

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

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