NOT MAKING THE CUT

Millions of animals are used each year for classroom dissection. We’re going to change that.

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Animal researchers say they support openness—so why is it getting harder to obtain information?

15 FACES OF SURVIVAL
Meet some of the animals you’ve helped save through the NAVS Sanctuary Fund.
Art for Animals Winners are the Picture of Compassion

The response to this year’s Art for Animals competition was overwhelming! With 870 entries from around the U.S. and around the world, NAVS’ 29th annual art contest was our largest ever.

Of course, more entries made it all the more challenging for our judges to narrow them down to just a handful of winners. It may sound like a cliché, but we wish we could have given a prize to every entry.

Six prizes were awarded this year: One “Best in Show,” First and Second Place adult winners, two Third Place adult winners, and one Youth Award.

Judges awarded this year’s “Best In Show” to Regina Gelfer’s work, “Breakthrough.”

“As an artist,” Gelfer told NAVS, “my greatest joy comes in knowing my work might somehow communicate a message or move people in some way.”

First Place went to “Bridge to Freedom” by Ceren Gobelez. Second Place went to “Emancipation” by Mustafa Akman. And two Third Place recipients, “Marta: Available for Adoption” by Faith Humphrey Hill and “I Love Them” by Rossella Paolini, rounded off our slate of adult winners. Eight-year-old Zhdan Protsuk received this year’s Youth Award for “Save Me.”

Thanks to all of the amazing artists who lent their talent—and compassion—to Art for Animals 2018.
Around the Country…On the Road…and On the Air!

If it seems as though NAVS has been popping up everywhere lately, it's probably because we have!

- As summer began, NAVS went west to exhibit and meet with animal advocates across the country at this year’s Animal Rights National Conference in Los Angeles.

  In addition to educating attendees on NAVS' efforts to end the exploitation of animals used in science, we had the opportunity to hear from a wide variety of organizations—from sanctuaries to vegan food pioneers—who are all working to make the world a better place for animals.

- A month later, NAVS was back in L.A. for the National Conference of State Legislatures’ Legislative Summit. There, we presented a compelling argument in favor of giving students the right to choose dissection alternatives in the classroom.

  Each year, the Summit draws thousands of state senators, representatives, staff members, policy advisors and others to learn and lobby on issues of interest to state legislators.

  In addition to persuading policymakers that animal dissection has no place in a 21st century classroom, NAVS met with legislators with an interest in introducing laws in their state to give students the right to opt out of the practice.

- Dissection alternatives were once again front and center in October, when NAVS took part in the Illinois Science Teachers Association (ISTA) meeting in Chicago (photo, top right).

  Even though Illinois passed a law in 2000 that guarantees the right of students who object to dissection to utilize alternatives without being penalized, NAVS has learned that many educators and students in the state were unaware of the law and how it should be implemented.

  To help address this knowledge gap, NAVS provided ISTA meeting attendees with comprehensive information about the advantages of using modern, non-animal teaching methods. We also provided the educators with a copy of the Illinois student choice law and a checklist to ensure that they are in compliance with the law.

- NAVS also took to the airwaves on legendary Chicago radio station WGN in October to chat with host Elysabeth Alfano, Director of Legal and Legislative Programs Marcia Kramer visited the “WGN Nightside” program (photo, center right) to discuss NAVS’ efforts to end the use of animals for cosmetics testing, classroom dissection, and other issues pertaining to animals used in science.

- Finally, visitors to Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin may have noticed the familiar NAVS logo on a billboard on US-18/151 (photo, bottom right). This fall, in the runup to the November elections, NAVS was proud to assist the residents of Mt. Horeb with a resolution that would have prohibited the transport and ownership of dogs and cats with the intent to use them in painful research, testing or experimentation in their village.

  Ridgian Farms, one of the country’s largest research beagle-breeding facilities, lies just outside Mt. Horeb. This resolution was a strong stand against the multi-billion-dollar animal testing and research industry that profits from the suffering of animals, and one which NAVS was proud to support in such a visible manner.
**Dissection Alternatives by the Numbers**

- **125+** High school-level dissection alternatives currently available (and new ones are being introduced all the time)
- **18** Species of animals (including human) represented by these alternatives
- **16** States that allow students the right to opt out of dissection
- **100** County school boards that give students that right
- **1** Model law available through NAVS to send to your school district to ensure students don’t have to dissect

**NAVS to Biology Teachers: Cut Out Dissection...**

“The classroom teacher is responsible for determining what activities will be most effective in meeting the educational objectives of a class. NABT encourages teachers to be approachable and responsive to substantive student objections to dissection and to provide appropriate lessons for those students. At the same time, NABT urges teachers to be aware that alternatives to dissection have their limitations. Finally, NABT supports the use of these materials as adjuncts to the educational process but not as exclusive replacements for the use of actual organisms.”

_National Association of Biology Teachers Position Statement on the Use of Animals in Biology Education (2008)_

“Endorsement of alternatives by your organization—as full replacements for animal specimens, rather than as merely adjuncts—would raise awareness among biology educators about the availability of dissection alternatives and the benefits of using these methods to teach the life sciences.”

_In a letter from NAVS and other animal advocacy organizations to the National Association of Biology Teachers, asking for an update to their Position Statement regarding the Use of Animals in Biology Education (2018)_

**...And We’re Not Alone**

“There are concerns from some that dissection teaches young talented students that the right, and perhaps only way to study biology is to kill animals and take them apart. Non-animal alternatives can help build an ethical culture of science that respects animal life. If suitable alternatives to the use of animals in science exist then it is our ethical obligation to use them.”

_Animals in Science Policy Institute, Why Choose Non-Animal Alternatives? (2017)_]
Animal Tests: Predictably Non-predictive

“While in vivo animal systems provide a lifelike system in terms of architecture and complex physiological interactions, in many cases the effects of drugs on animal tissue are not translatable to humans. This lack of translatability is one reason for drug trial failures.”

In “Improving productivity with better predictivity,” Drug Discovery World, Summer 2018

Organoids are a Brainy Solution

“Organoids offer a powerful tool for scientists studying the mysteries of the brain, which by some estimates is the most complex object in the world. Unlike cancer, which researchers can study by growing cancer cells in a dish, the brain and its disorders have been largely off-limits, except through hard-to-get post-mortem tissue that offered only a snapshot or by trying to study much simpler animal brains.”

In “Lab-grown brain bits open windows to the mind- and a maze of ethical dilemmas”, Washington Post, September 2, 2018

Picking up a Fresh Six-Pack

“Our data shows that we can replace six common tests—which account for 57% of the world’s animal toxicology testing—with computer-based prediction and get more reliable results.”

Dr. Thomas Hartung of the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health in “New digital chemical screening tool could help eliminate animal testing,” Nature, July 2018. The six tests refer to the toxicological “six-pack”: oral, dermal, and inhalation toxicity testing, skin and eye irritation tests, and skin sensitization tests.

Transparency Imperiled?

“Federal agencies may have additional information about their animal use programs… Stakeholders other than animal advocacy organizations—including federal agencies, research organizations, academia, and others—generally expressed the view that federal agencies should not routinely make additional information available to the public, citing reasons including the existence of other methods to obtain this information and administrative burden.”

In “Animal Use in Federal Research” GAO report, May 2018

The Tide is Turning

(Source: Pew)

52 Percentage of Americans oppose the use of animals in scientific research according to 2018 Pew survey

43 Percentage of who held that belief in 2009

Try a Little Tenderness

“While there is still much to learn about the cognitive and emotional lives of other animals, more scientific evidence won’t refute the fact that they need to be treated with much more care, tenderness, and humaneness than they currently are.”

Dr. Mark Bekoff, professor emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder in “Will More Science Show It’s Really OK to Harm Animals?” Psychology Today, June 20, 2018
NAVS’ advocates helped make this year a productive one for humane legislation. In 2018, NAVS reviewed 1,975 animal-related bills from 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 207 federal bills. Topics included cosmetics testing, puppy mills, a ban on the use of gestation crates, companion animal cruelty, hunting and trapping, animal abuser registries, and bans on the sale of ivory.

The NAVS Advocacy Center posted a record number of bills, on which we asked advocates and supporters like you to make your voices heard. And you did! Through the NAVS Advocacy Center, you sent more than 100,000 emails to state and federal legislators, urging humane action on pending legislation.

Adoption legislation, which is being championed by NAVS in states across the country, would require research facilities to offer healthy dogs and cats for adoption once they are no longer using them, either through an internal adoption program or through a reputable shelter or rescue organization. NAVS began actively soliciting legislators to introduce this legislation in 2017, and several states offered bills for consideration. Illinois, which had previously considered this bill without success, finally adopted this measure.

In 2018, NAVS once again reached out to legislators on this issue. Ten states introduced legislation, and three of these states, Delaware, Maryland and Rhode Island passed a law. A bill passed the Massachusetts Senate, but is waiting for House action before the session ends. New Jersey has companion bills, S 226 and A 3274, both of which have been reported out of committee and await a vote of their respective chambers. New Jersey has a two-year session that runs from 2018-2019, so there is still an opportunity to pass this legislation before the end of next year.

Also, this year, bills to end animal testing for product safety were introduced in two states, Massachusetts and Virginia. Meanwhile, New York and California—which already have product testing bans in place—introduced bills to prohibit the sale within their states of animal-tested cosmetics that were tested elsewhere. Virginia passed its ban on animal testing for cosmetics, while California passed a ban on the sale of products tested outside of California within their state.

In addition, many federal bills have returned for consideration, including the federal Humane Cosmetics Act, which—to date—has garnered a record number of 185 cosponsors thanks to advocates like you. The bill still awaits a hearing, however. The BEST Practices Act, which would end the use of animals for battlefield trauma training by the military, also received a fair amount of support, although the likelihood of it passing this year is slim. Newer bills this session, the PUPPERS Act (to end research on dogs by the Veteran’s Administration) and the KITTEN Act (to end painful experiments on cats at federal research facilities) also garnered much attention and support, though they did not pass.

Be sure to visit the NAVS Advocacy Center at NAVS.org/take-action to support animal-friendly bills (and oppose detrimental ones) in your state or at the federal level.
A recently-released report from the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) contained what appeared on its face to be positive news regarding the use of animals in science: The overall number of Animal Welfare Act (AWA)-covered animals used by USDA licensees decreased over the past year. Unfortunately, a little digging into the numbers revealed that this overall decrease masked the fact that the use of most individual animal species actually increased.

The report shows that the number of AWA-covered animals used for research, testing, teaching and experimentation by USDA licensees decreased, from 820,812 in 2016 to 792,168 in 2017, representing an overall reduction of 3.5%. So far, so good. Despite this promising finding, however, the use of most types of lab animals increased over the past year. Use of sheep increased the most (15.2%), followed by “other farm animals” (9.9%), primates (6.5%), dogs (6.1%), guinea pigs (4.7%) rabbits (4.6%) and pigs (1.6%).

So how is it that use of most animal species increased, while the overall animal use number decreased? It’s due primarily to a large reduction (32.1%) in animal use in the “all other covered species” category, a vague grouping which includes the AWA-covered animals not mentioned in the categories previously listed. In addition, both cats and hamsters saw a 4% decrease in their use over the past year. These reductions combined to bring down the overall animal use figure.

These increases come on the heels of a Pew research survey conducted this past spring, which revealed that the majority of Americans—52%—now oppose the use of animals in scientific research. This number is up from the 43% of individuals who held that belief in 2009 and is validation of the work NAVS has undertaken over the years to increase awareness and change attitudes toward animal experimentation. These findings are consistent with overall trends reported in recent Gallup polls which have shown decreasing levels of support for medical testing on animals.

While we are encouraged to see a decline in overall animal use, we have serious concerns about the increases in animal use for most categories of animals. Moving from one species to another is not the answer—and it is not the will of the American public.

True progress will only come from replacement of all outdated animal models with smarter, more human-relevant solutions. NAVS continues to lead the way toward this more humane future through our funding of cutting-edge research via the International Foundation for Ethical Research, our recognition of high school students who advance humane science at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, and our ongoing efforts to ensure that research animals have the opportunity for lives after the labs.

To learn more about NAVS’ Smarter Science initiatives—and how you can help advance science without harming animals—visit NAVS.org/smarter.
NOT MAKING THE CUT
DISSECTION HAS NO PLACE IN A MODERN SCIENCE CLASSROOM, YET THE PRACTICE CONTINUES. HERE'S WHY—AND HOW WE'RE WORKING TO CHANGE THINGS.

Animal dissection has been routinely practiced in American biology classrooms for decades. It continues to be a common practice, despite the availability of modern, non-animal teaching methods that have been recognized to be more effective and less expensive than traditional animal dissection.

As a result, millions of animals are used as dissection specimens every year, many of whom were killed specifically for this purpose. More needs to be done to spare the lives of these animals, while delivering a quality education to students.

NAVS has long confronted this problem by serving as a resource for valuable information about dissection alternatives and student choice measures for students, teachers, and parents. Some of our earlier efforts involved the establishment of a Dissection Hotline and BioLEAP—the Biology Education Advancement Program. The former gave advice on establishing student choice policies, talking to teachers about opting out of dissection and using alternatives in the classroom. The latter emphasized the availability of educational resources that can facilitate a student’s understanding of anatomy, physiology and the life sciences without harming animals, along with promoting student choice initiatives.

Recently, we have focused our efforts on administering surveys to students and teachers to better understand the current use of animal dissection and alternatives and attitudes toward the practices. This information has greatly helped us identify obstacles that hinder the wider use of dissection alternatives. Through these surveys, we have learned that the majority of biology educators feel that information about dissection alternatives is not widely disseminated, have not been notified about whether their state has a student choice measure in place, and have not been taught about the “3Rs” (reduction, refinement and replacement) of animal use during their education to become a science teacher.

Our surveys have also revealed that biology teachers continue to hold strong opinions about the benefits of dissection, and that they have concerns about the effectiveness of alternatives. We believe that one reason they may hold these views is because of the stance that some science educational organizations have about dissection and alternatives. For instance, the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) has an outdated Position Statement regarding the Use of Animals in Biology Education (see pg. 4).

The current statement, last updated in 2008, indicates that the NABT supports the use of dissection alternatives as adjuncts to the educational process but not as exclusive replacements for the use of actual organisms.

Support of alternatives as replacements to animal dissection from science educational organizations, combined with broader dissemination of information about alternatives, would likely encourage more educators to use alternatives in place of animal dissection. Therefore, NAVS has joined a coalition of several other animal welfare organizations to put pressure on NABT to reconsider its position on dissection such that alternatives are viewed as full replacements for animal specimens, rather than as merely adjuncts to them. A similar effort is being made to reach out to the National Science Teachers Association to persuade them to review and revise their position on the use of alternatives.

NAVS is working hard to provide educators with comprehensive information about the advantages of using dissection alternatives and student choice measures. Each school year, we contact state boards of education and ask them to disseminate information we have compiled on alternatives and student choice to their teachers. We also attend teacher’s conferences so that we can chat one-on-one with biology teachers to provide them with resources that encourage the use of dissection alternatives to reduce animal use in education.

In addition to surveying teachers and students, NAVS has been submitting Freedom of Information Act requests to states around the country to better understand trends in dissection use.

One factor we have encountered is the disparity of use between rural versus urban areas and between wealthy versus poorer sections of the country. One such example is Colorado. NAVS sent Open Records Act requests to 175 Colorado county school boards and received responses from 67 of them. Of the school boards that did respond, 13 told NAVS that they did not dissect animals at all. The most common reason for this was low budget and the small size of the school system. In urban areas, including a majority of responding school districts in the Denver area, dissection use was rampant. Only some of these schools allow students to opt out of dissection, and very few of those schools have a written policy available. Of the schools that do dissect, the amount of money spent on dissection specimens varies from $0 (small number of donated specimens) to $3,400 per year.

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In Wisconsin, we received responses from 140 out of 443 districts contacted. Those districts reported spending a total of over $100,000 annually on animal dissection, excluding large school districts which reported spending $500-$5,000 per school. Additionally, over 90% of Wisconsin school districts who responded do not have a written policy accommodating student requests to opt out of dissection, or to use a dissection alternative.

NAVS uses the information we gain from these FOIA inquiries to craft strategies for promoting student choice. Our CHOICE (Compassionate Humane Options in Classroom Education) initiative was launched to encourage states without a student choice law or policy to consider introducing one. Our efforts have gotten student choice bills introduced in a number of states over the last few years, although we have faced formidable opposition to passage of this type of legislation.

Collecting data—on dissection use, the lack of written policy and the high cost of dissection—is one way we persuade legislators to consider introducing this legislation. While, ultimately, we are confident that classroom dissection will be considered an archaic educational tool, we are not willing to wait for that to happen. Instead, we work to identify problems and engage educators and legislators by providing them with solutions to improve every student’s classroom learning experience.

We believe that no animal should have to suffer for any student to obtain a good education. And we hold that no student should be asked to be responsible for an animal’s suffering as part of that education.

In the short term, we are working to ensure that no student is forced to make a choice between compassion and a passing grade. Over the long-term, we hope to engage educators throughout the country in exploring and adopting the use of educational resources that excite and motivate learning without the use of once-live animals.

Many innovative alternatives already exist, and more are being developed every year. This fall, for example, Intel launched a nationwide “virtual reality experience” tour to demonstrate immersive technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality that can take the place of—and even improve upon—activities such as traditional classroom dissection.*

You can help in this effort by advocating for student choice in your local schools, and, if your state does not already have a student choice law or policy in place, through your state legislature. And whether or not your state has a student choice policy in place, you can help spread the word about exciting learning opportunities that do not rely on animal specimens.

Be sure to visit the NAVS Advocacy Center at NAVS.org/take-action for opportunities to promote legislation or a statewide policy in your state. Help NAVS bring science education into the 21st century with compassion.

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NAVS has asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to conduct an investigation into what we deem potentially dangerous home animal experimentation kits being offered for sale to the public by a California-based company.

The company, The Odin, began selling “Frog Genetic Engineering Kits,” which allow the public to purchase live animals for the purpose of conducting gene therapy experiments, this past summer. Each kit includes six live tree frogs, syringes pre-filled with growth-enhancing DNA and other chemicals, live crickets with which to feed to the frogs, and other supplies. The kits currently retail for $299 each.

In October of this year, NAVS submitted letters to the USDA and the FDA, in which we expressed our concern that although this kit—and many others sold by the company—purports to follow guidelines established by the NIH Guide for Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, it does not have the oversight or approval of any federal agency, and certainly not on an individual basis. As a result, there is no oversight to ensure that those who purchase the kits are treating the frogs humanely and properly caring for them when the experiment is over.

The sale of these kits not only threatens the lives of the frogs being subjected to the experiments, but it also poses risks to other animals, humans, and the environment. The unregulated nature of the kits’ sale means that there is nothing to stop individuals, especially children, from injecting themselves or others with DNA, nor is there any way to prevent people from injecting other animals, including companion animals, with genetic material. There is also no oversight or control over disposal of materials during and after the experiment is done.

NAVS Executive Director Kenneth Kandaras says the sale of such kits sends a troubling message about the value of animals in society.

“Selling live animals to the general public for the explicit purpose of experimenting on them encourages people to think of these intelligent, complex creatures as nothing more than research tools,” Kandaras says.

Kandaras points to language on the Frog Genetic Engineering Protocol on The Odin’s website, which notes that “severely injured” frogs can be kept submerged in the provided anesthetizing compound, after which they “will not recover consciousness” and “can then be buried or flushed down the toilet.”

Further, he observes that the project’s Protocol admits that the provided tree frogs “can survive for up to 10 years with proper care.”

“How many people,” he asks, “who are interested in conducting what is essentially a home science experiment are committed to feeding, housing and caring for these animals for up to a decade?”

Finally, Kandaras notes that there is little to no value or knowledge to be gained through The Odin’s frog experiment kits.

“The purported goal of the experiments—to measure the effect of an insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) gene on the animals—has long been established,” Kandaras notes. “Scientists already know what IGF-1 does. This DIY kit is not encouraging the advancement of science—it is perpetuating cruelty toward animals.”
Earlier this year, nearly 600 scientists and members of the animal research community signed an open letter published in USA Today which called for more transparency in animal research. “We call upon our country’s research institutions—large and small—to embrace openness,” they said. “We should proudly explain how animals are used for the advancement of science and medicine, in the interest of the wellbeing of humans and animals.”

But how sincere is the research community being about its desire for transparency? The answer, unfortunately, appears to be “not very.”

This past May, as part of our ongoing legislative advocacy program in support of dog and cat adoption, NAVS sought out information on the use of dogs and cats at Nebraska research institutions in 2017. We wanted to know which institutions used dogs and cats, how many were used, and for what type of research they were being used.

We started by going to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) website, where we were able to obtain some general information. We identified six research institutions that combined used 140 dogs and cats in 2017. We were also able to determine that all but seven of the animals required the administration of pain relief.

What was lacking, though, was solid information about the purposes for which the animals were being used. Often, institutional reports on animal use will include benign procedures such as spaying or neutering, or medical treatment conducted in cooperation with shelters or veterinary offices.

After hours searching for additional data, we discovered that two of the institutions included in our initial search did, in fact, offer veterinary programs. However, this information came from a separate search of the college websites, not from APHIS records. And the available information still did not reveal whether the animals at those facilities were being helped, or if they were used as subjects of experiments.

There are more problems with the current system. Using APHIS’ search
tool, we can no longer search for animals by species to discover which institutions are using them. We can no longer find enforcement actions against any research institutions unless they go through a USDA administrative law judge. And we cannot—and never have been able to—find out from APHIS for what purpose research institutions are using animals.

NAVS’ experiences are not unique. A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office Report (GAO) to Congressional Requesters on Animal Use in Federal Research actually suggests that researchers are not open to transparency, but rather, fighting against it.

When asked whether federal agencies that may have additional information about their animal use programs should share more animal use data with the public, the GAO report stated that “Stakeholders, other than animal advocacy organizations—including federal agencies, research organizations, academia, and others—generally expressed the view that federal agencies should not routinely make additional [animal use] information available to the public, citing reasons including the existence of other methods to obtain this information and administrative burden.”

So much for the animal research community’s call to “embrace openness.”

NAVS’ mission to end the exploitation of animals used in science involves educating the public regarding the use and abuse of animals in research. As such, we have an obligation to provide accurate information on animal use to our supporters, policymakers and members of the general public, whose tax dollars help fund this multi-billion-dollar industry.

But our ability to obtain meaningful information on the way animals are used in research in the United States continues to be met with obstacles. The two biggest: time and money.

**TOO MUCH TIME**

It has been almost two years since APHIS unexpectedly took its Animal Care Search Tool offline. This was an interactive database that NAVS and other animal advocacy organizations used on a regular basis for understanding trends in animal use and investigating Animal Welfare Act violations by research institutions.

APHIS rolled out a new search tool in 2017, which they referred to as “a refined public search tool…to make animal welfare information publicly available.” However, APHIS’ new research tool is “refined” only in the sense that it denies previously accessible information. Users can no longer run the same type of on-demand, customized searches. The database restricts the quality and quantity of data provided by the agency, and certainly provides no new information that illuminates animal use.

The public has been asked to file Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIAs) to gather the information that is no longer accessible in this database. But, from our own experience, using FOIAs to obtain information from APHIS is much less efficient and more time-consuming than the use of the pre-existing Animal Care Search Tool. For instance, it took more than nine months for APHIS to respond to a FOIA request regarding USDA licensees with direct violations of the Animal Welfare Act based on inspections that have taken place within the past 12 months. And when we finally received a response, the information APHIS provided was almost entirely redacted. APHIS stated that they “have determined that the protection against potential harassment, possible threats, and the overall invasion of personal privacy far outweighs any public interest in revealing their personal information.”

According to the FOIA annual report, the number of FOIA requests APHIS received from October 2015-September 2016 to October 2016-September 2017 jumped 54%, from 1,146 to 1,762 requests. In that same time frame, APHIS processed 21% fewer requests.

Since the search tool was removed in 2017, the time to process a request has increased, and it continues to do so. In 2017, the average response time increased to 124 days for a simple request and 266 days for a complex request. Because of this lengthy delay, the public can no longer access any data in a timely fashion, making much of the information outdated by the time it is obtained.

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TOO MUCH MONEY

NAVS has also faced roadblocks when trying to get a better understanding of the purpose of various animal experiments conducted in university labs. Because APHIS fails to collect basic information from research facilities on how animals are being used for teaching, testing and research for their annual reports, we must resort to filing FOIAs to universities directly to gain access to this information.

However, private institutions are not required to respond to FOIA requests. And public institutions are not very forthcoming with detailed information. Even if the universities are willing to provide the requested information, the cost to obtain the records is often high and relevant information is generally redacted from the final report.

Last summer, NAVS sent the same FOIA request to nearly two dozen institutions to obtain information on protocols for experiments on cats and dogs. Some institutions improperly denied our request because we weren’t residents of the state in which the university was located. Others said the records we requested were not public records under state law and refused to share the information.

A few universities did respond to our FOIA quickly and without cost, while others, like Iowa State University, threatened to charge “tens of thousands of dollars” to fulfill the records request. Texas A&M was not far behind, as they wanted more than $12,000 to provide responses to our request. Nearly all universities denied—or simply ignored—our request for fee waiver as a nonprofit.

Billions of taxpayer dollars are spent on animal experimentation in the United States every year, despite the public’s decreasing support of animal research. Taxpayers should have a right to obtain basic information on animal use; it should not be cost prohibitive. Universities inflate the cost of fulfilling FOIA requests to prevent the public from accessing this information. What are they trying to hide?

IMPEDING PROGRESS

There are consequences to not being able to access this very basic information on animal experimentation, and it is delaying the progress we are able to make on important initiatives.

Just one example: As part of our campaign to ensure the adoption of cats and dogs no longer being used for research purposes, NAVS provides information to legislators on the number of animals used by research institutions in their state. Last year, NAVS saw an opportunity to advance this humane legislation in the state of Pennsylvania. But doing so required access to animal use data for the state. The cost of responding to FOIA requests, and the fact that private institutions did not have to respond to them, left us without vital statistics needed to back up our request, and thus stymied this important legislative effort.

And it goes beyond simply introducing legislation. The public’s attitude toward animal research is shifting—a majority of Americans now oppose the practice. The reasons for this progress are many; however, chief among them is the increased awareness of the issue that NAVS and other animal protection organizations have been able to bring to the forefront.

The bottom line is that facts are being hidden from us—and from you. The animal research community does not want them to be published, and they are doing everything they can to delay, impede and restrict access to this information. At a time when all other parts of society are moving toward ease of access to information, our government and the animal research community you support with your tax dollars are moving backward.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

The public has been kept in the dark about animal experimentation for too long. There needs to be more transparency regarding the kinds of experiments that are conducted on animals.

NAVS has taken important steps to make information about animal use more easily accessible to the public. In 2014, we submitted a petition for rulemaking that would require the USDA to collect and report on how animals are used in research, teaching and testing, which is important in advocating for change. Despite the fact that the USDA received more than 1,700 comments on our request, APHIS continues to delay making any response to our requested rulemaking.

In the meantime, having APHIS restore full information to a functional, user-friendly searchable database in which customized searches can be run would be a step in the right direction, and it would save governmental agencies time and money by reducing the necessity of responding to most FOIA requests.

A full understanding of how many—and for what purposes—animals are being used is an important tool in advocating for change. With your continued support, NAVS will continue to fight for increased transparency and accountability on the part of our government to aid us in our efforts to ensure no animal is exploited in the name of science.
The NAVS Sanctuary Fund is a lifeline to animal rescues, shelters and sanctuaries who find themselves in desperate need of financial assistance.

Primates, Incorporated is a new sanctuary located outside of Madison, WI, and thanks in part to a NAVS Sanctuary Fund grant, they were recently able to welcome their very first residents. Mars, River and Izzle were recently retired from an out-of-state research facility, and our generous donors helped cover the cost to ensure these animals made it to Primates, Incorporated. As opposition to animal testing and experimentation continues to grow—and animals in laboratories are replaced by smarter, more humane science—the need for sanctuaries like Primates, Incorporated will only increase, and the NAVS Sanctuary Fund plans to be there to help.

An entire community of feral cats was in danger in Arkansas when a local animal advocate contacted Stray Central. A developer was threatening to poison dozens of cats—including many kittens, as well as pregnant cats—if they weren’t removed from the site. While the developer eventually gave those working for the animals more time, the situation was still complicated. Many rescues aren’t equipped to handle feral cats, and many shelters simply euthanize them. A NAVS Sanctuary Fund grant is helping Stray Central save the colony. They have taken in 19 cats, though they estimate there are 20-30 more to trap. All the animals will need to be spayed/neutered, treated for their bad flea infestations and upper respiratory infections, and tested for FeLV/FIV—but the good news is they will now be safe.

Four cats—all from different, yet dark, pasts—thankfully found their way to Animals in Distress in Wilton, CT. A NAVS Sanctuary Fund grant helped address many different veterinary needs for these animals. Greya, a cat rescued from a hoarding situation, had to have an eye removed and subsequently biopsied. Clyde was abandoned and, after seeing a veterinarian, was diagnosed with thyroid disease and had to undergo iodine treatments. Copper and Archer were both victims of abandonment and neglect; Copper has since had all his teeth removed, and Archer tested FIV+. Despite these many medical needs and issues, there is great hope that with the continued support of Animals in Distress, these cats will have brighter futures.

A backyard breeder brought four “purebred” Shar-Pei puppies to Ramapo-Bergen Animal Refuge in Oakland, NJ, saying that because of their blindness and medical needs, they could no longer be sold. Sadly, the puppies’ mother was also victim to the awful practice of backyard breeding and died during birth. While Avocado, Veggie, Zucchini and Arugula all suffered from entropion of the eye and needed surgery, NAVS provided a Sanctuary Fund grant to help cover some of the costs, and the Animal Eye Center of New Jersey offered their services at a discount.

Jasmine and Julie were victims of a severe neglect situation. The two hounds were confiscated when concerned citizens contacted the local authorities about their owner. The emaciated dogs were then transferred to Friends of Campbell County Animals in Jacksboro, TN. They needed care from a special facility that provided IV fluids, prescription food, medications, antibiotics and, for one of the dogs, a blood transfusion. The NAVS Sanctuary Fund helped offset the steep cost of Jasmine and Julie’s medical care, and we’re happy to report they’re expected to make a full recovery.
Ending the use of animals in science is a long-term commitment. Joining NAVS’ Circle of Compassion is an easy and effective way to ensure that NAVS has the necessary, steady funding needed to support our advocacy, education and humane science programs throughout the year.

You can conveniently contribute the amount of your choice on the same day every month automatically via your credit card or checking account.

Join a very special group of committed supporters in NAVS’ Circle of Compassion. Use the envelope inside this issue of Animal Action, call us at 800-888-NAVS or sign up online at NAVS.org/circle.