

# Anti-vivisectionists deplore human arrogance in torturous experiments

by Muriel Draisma  
for Canadian University Press

A rhesus monkey cowers in his cage at the front of the room. His disfigured face bears the scars of animal research and his eyes emanate fear. A small steel chain hanging from his neck binds him to the floor.

The monkey is only an image on a photograph, but the terror in his eyes is alive and real.

Human arrogance is responsible for his pain, an American psychologist said at an animal rights symposium held in August in Vancouver. The symposium brought together anti-vivisectionists from the United States, Great Britain, and Canada.

Humans have institutionalized cruelty towards animals through their arrogant assumption that they are the superior species, said Michael Giannelli, science advisor for Fund for Animals.

"We are unchallenged planetary gullies and are still drunk with power, having only recently clawed our way to the top of the food chain."

Institutionalized acts of violence towards other animals, called "specieism", includes sport hunting, factory farming, and vivisection, Giannelli said. The focus of many animal rights groups is vivisection, and much of that research takes place on university campuses.

Peter Hamilton, founder of the Vancouver based LifeForce animal rights society, described abuse of animals at University of B.C.

One experiment is the spinal cord test, where researchers sedate dogs and then drop weights on their exposed spinal cords. The animals have to drag their paralysed hind legs to move, and their bladders can only be emptied by hand pressure or catheterization, he said.

Funded by the Canadian Paraplegic Association and the B.C. Health Care Research Foundation, the experiment attempts to create an animal model of spinal cord injury. The animals are fed a variety of drugs and are "stimulated" to jump three feet to determine their recovery rate. "The animals get ulcers after this traumatic thing is done to them," Hamilton said.

These spinal cord tests are redundant because they do not eliminate the need for clinical testing on humans, Hamilton said. "Stopping these tests will not endanger human life."

Giannelli said animal researchers have reached the psychological point where they can inflict pain and not feel morally responsible. But he stressed the researchers themselves are not sadistic - the system is to blame.

Canadian university labs have killed more than one million animals in 1982, just over half of all the animals used for research in Canada that year. University researchers are supposed to conform to the standards of the Canadian Council on Animal Care, which was established by the National Research Council to ensure responsible animal research.

But Hamilton said the inspections are only conducted once every three years and 30 days notice is given to the laboratory.

Dr. Frank Flowers, Director of Assessments in the CCAC's Ottawa office, said "I don't think there's any doubt that Canadian labs maintain a high standard (of animal care) probably the highest in the world."

The CCAC panel acts through local animal care committees at institutions, making suggestions and supporting their work. Adherence to the CCAC's guide to the care and use of animals is voluntary.

"Where there are long-standing deficiencies in an institution's animal care, it is quite possible that major granting agencies would withhold funding until they comply with our standards," Flowers said. "It's interesting to note it has not been necessary for any granting institution to do that."

But Hamilton is not satisfied with the CCAC system. "The people involved in the committee are animal researchers themselves. They promote it. What we need is a full-time unbiased group to look after and protect these animals," he said, referring to the fact the CCAC has little time to review UBC's 23 labs extensively.

John McNeill, chair of the UBC animal care committee, said many of Hamilton's charges are false. The committee, which is responsible for ethics and feasibility of research at UBC, has determined that spinal cord experiments are necessary to provide background information before humans are tested, he said.

Three of the 14 committee members are not "animal users", McNeill said. "We have individuals who are not desensitized and who are not part of the system. Through these members we have attempted to meet the demands of people other than animal users."

One member of the national CCAC panel is appointed by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies.

Of the 1.9 million animals killed in Canada in 1982, more than half were rats and mice. Other animals include 5,000 dogs, 10,000 cats and 300,000 fish, Flowers said.



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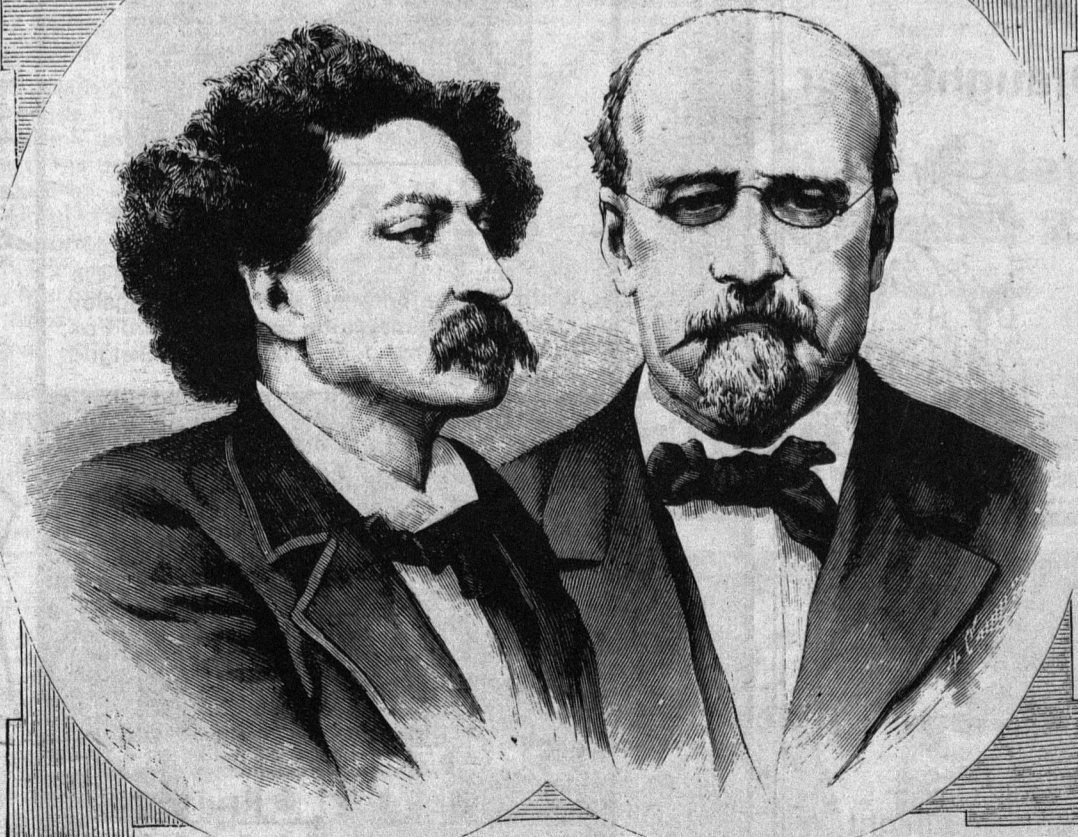
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