

**Primate Health and Well-being at the
California Primate Research Center:
Negligence, Stress, and Suffering**

By Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T.,

Executive Director, SAEN

513-575-5517

saen@saenonline.org

Introduction

The University of California at Davis is one of the 10 largest primate research laboratories in the United States confining over 4000 primates during any given year. According to government reports this facility receives \$81 million per year (for the 2002 – 2003) from the federal government for the performance of primate experimentation.

Legitimate concerns have been raised regarding the condition of primates within large facilities like UC Davis. Animal advocates are clearly worried about the suffering endured by the titi monkeys and rhesus monkeys incarcerated at the UC Davis primate Center. Therefore, we have performed an investigation of the health and welfare of the primates at this facility based upon post-mortem records for the period 5/1/02 – 4/30/03. This period coincides with the reporting period for the annual progress reports filed annually by the primate center with their funding agency – the National Center for Research Resources. 583 primates died at the UC Davis facility during this period and the records of these deaths have formed the basis of this report.

Overall Mortality Statistics

583 total primates died at UC Davis during the 2002 – 2003 reporting period. However to examine these deaths in any systematic way they must be subdivided into more meaningful sub-categories. 147 of these deaths involved stillbirths, neonatal deaths, or deaths of primates who lives totaled only a few days or months. 123 adult primates died of natural causes or were euthanized for medical reasons. 318 primates were killed during experimentation, and/or necropsied per experimental protocol.

However, before more detailed examinations are begun there is a much more basic question that must be addressed. The annual report filed by the California Primate Research Center listed the deaths of 258 primates from either experimental or natural causes. However, this same report discusses performing necropsies (post-mortems) on 560 primates. Additionally, when we obtained documents from the California Primate Research Center (CPRC) for deaths of center animals we received records for the deaths of 583 primates. And the disagreements go much further. The records provided to SAEN by the CPRC covered the deaths of 123 adults from non-experimental causes, and 318 adults from experimental causes (or necropsied per experimental protocol). If operating under the assumption that only adults were counted, even these numbers don't correspond to the statistics reported by the CPRC. Apparently, CPRC staff are mathematically impaired, or dishonest.

Infant Primate Deaths

During the reporting period for this examination there were 142 infant/neonatal deaths at the CPRC. This contrasts with 646 total births. This computes to a 22% infant mortality rate. Additionally, in the older cases of infant deaths (non-stillbirth/non-fetal) over half were suffering from inanition (severe weight loss) or dehydration (26 of 47/25 of 47). These symptoms are indicative of serious conditions which have progressed to a catastrophic conclusion. In other words, these animals were allowed to suffer needlessly because their conditions progressed to an unnecessarily severe ending. Apparently either their decline was totally unnoticed, or their conditions were ignored until they were found dead.

Deaths from Natural Causes/Medical Cull

During the reporting period 123 adult primates died of natural causes or were euthanized for humane reasons. 37% (46) had reached an advanced state of inanition (serious weight loss) 32% (39) were severely dehydrated. Again, this indicates that disease conditions are being allowed to progress much too far without adequate veterinary intervention. Many of these animals are listed simply as “found dead in cage” with no clinical history. In other words, they were seriously ill without receiving any veterinary care. A 3-year and 9-month old primate was necropsied on 1/15/03. This unfortunate animal has lost 40% of her body weight in a period of 22 days. Another primate was necropsied on 8/27/02. She had lost 34% of her body weight in a period of weeks. A third primate was necropsied on 8/6/02. He had lost 42% of his body weight in a period of less than one month. Clearly these animals are being neglected up to the point of death.

Other serious conditions existed in this population of animals at CPRC. 38% (47) of these animals were suffering from gastro-intestinal tract disease. Fully 13 of these primates had suffered serious physical trauma. One primate is listed as being found dead in cage after surgery (clear negligence and lack of observation). Other serious disease conditions in this primate population included: pneumonia, peritonitis, lung mites, bloat, and endometriosis.

Experimental Deaths

318 primates at the CPRC are listed as experimental deaths/necropsied per experimental protocol. 19% (60) were either inanated or severely thin; 17% (29) were listed as dehydrated. 36% (115) suffered from lymphadenopathy and 25% (79) suffered from splenomegaly. 17% (54) suffered from gastrointestinal tract diseases. Other disease conditions in this population of primates included: pneumonia, meningitis, jaundice, endometriosis and lung mites. Again, it is very clear that these animals have been allowed to progress to an unacceptably severe endpoint for the pathological conditions which brought about their deaths.

Summary

In conclusion, it is clear that the primates who are incarcerated at the California Primate Research Center are suffering from many and varied pathological conditions and that the treatment they receive for these conditions is both inadequate and negligent. Many primates are simply found dead in their cages, indicating that the only way to get the attention of CPRC staff is to die. These primates clearly had severe conditions that went undiagnosed and untreated. Another primate was simply found dead in his cage after surgery. Post-surgical observation should be an assumed part of veterinary care, but it apparently doesn't take place at CPRC.

The relatively high number of primates that are severely thin and/or dehydrated at death also speaks to the severity of the diseases which CPRC primates suffer from. Several primates lost high percentages of their overall body weight in relatively short periods of time, another indication of severe disease – as much as 40% in 22 days. This is similar to a 150 pound human losing 60 pounds in 22 days. Other similar situations involved weight loss of 34% and 35% also in relatively short periods. These primates must have looked like humans who have either survived a death camp or who suffer from severe anorexia.

The incidence of trauma (19 in one year -- caused by fighting etc.) and the high rate of gastrointestinal tract disease clearly indicate that the CPRC colonies are highly stressed animals. The cause of this stress is unclear, but it likely comes from one of several sources. It must either be housing and conditions (particularly relevant to any primates at CPRC who are individually housed) or the highly invasive nature of experimentation at CPRC. Rather than discuss the nature of these experiments directly, we have taken the step of simply posting 175 of UC Davis's primate research protocols full text on our website at: <http://www.all-creatures.org/saen/res-fr-ca-ucd-p.html>. We believe very strongly that the general public should be allowed to read these documents and decide for themselves the true reality of animal experimentation. Upon reading these protocols they will find water deprivation, restraint chair confinement, the bolting of devices to primates skulls, and other highly invasive practices.

Clearly, animals suffer substantially at the CPRC, however this facility has claimed for several years in reports to the USDA that no primates suffer unrelieved pain or distress. This is clearly dishonest. Similarly, the annual progress report filed by CPRC with the National Center for Research Resources lists a total of 258 deaths, and yet this facility has necropsied over 500 of its own animals.

These extreme inconsistencies reveal a pattern of deceit which is indicative of a facility with much to hide.