USDA Probe cites UW for multiple animal deaths & 10 month denial of pain relief to 30; SAEN Applauds USDA Follow-up on Complaint

SEATTLE, WA – A USDA investigation of the University of Washington which resulted from an Official Complaint filed by Research Watchdog Group SAEN (Stop Animal Exploitation NOW!) has led to multiple citations against the UW for animal deaths and failure to provide pain relief to 30 animals for an extended period, as well as additional animal deaths and infractions discovered during the inspection.

SAEN filed an Official Complaint with the USDA relevant to a rabbit euthanasia due to a pelvic fracture (which staff could not explain) and failure to provide pain relief to a group of 30 rabbits following surgery on 2/5/14. The SAEN complaint was based on sensitive UW correspondence with the National Institutes of Health which SAEN had obtained via FOIA.

The USDA probe (2/28 - 3/3/14) not only cited the UW for both non-compliances raised by SAEN, but also added citations for a rabbit who had died during surgery, a guinea pig who was found dead by the USDA inspector during the inspection, as well as several animal handling issues relevant to macaque monkeys also discovered during the inspection.

Overall, the USDA cited the UW for non-compliances by the IACUC, as well as multiple incidents of both unqualified personnel, and improper animal handling.

“We are very pleased with the enforcement actions taken so far by the USDA's Western Regional Office,” said Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T., Executive Director, SAEN. "The University of Washington has again demonstrated a clear pattern of incompetence that killed multiple animals and potentially caused severe suffering to others. This incompetent lab deserves the maximum penalty allowable under the law."

The UW is the third lab cited by the USDA following SAEN complaints in the last several months. The USDA has also recently cited the University of Houston and the University of California, Davis following SAEN Official Complaints.

The USDA report and SAEN’s Official Complaints are available upon request from SAEN.