USDA Cites Harvard for second negligent Primate Death in 13 months; Watchdog Group Demands Federal Fine and Grant Recall

BOSTON/SOUTHBOROUGH, MA – Recently obtained federal reports reveal another round of major violations of the Animal Welfare Act within the labs of Harvard Medical School/New England Primate Research Center, according to the national research watchdog group SAEN. Harvard received five federal citations in an inspection during July of 2011 including one for a primate fatality.

On July 19, 2011 Harvard received five federal citations from the United States Department of Agriculture for violating the Animal Welfare Act. The violations involved unqualified personnel, inadequate research supervision by the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee, and inadequate housing of primates.

One citation was for a shocking incident which took place in February of 2011, when a non-human primate was overdosed on anesthetic by negligent research staff, causing untreatable renal failure, requiring euthanasia.

“This is the second time in just over a year that the death of a primate at the New England Primate Center has involved negligence,” said Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T., Executive Director, SAEN. “How many animals have to be killed by carelessness before the USDA takes action against this criminal lab?”

Harvard was cited by the USDA for another shocking incident which took place on June 9, 2010. On this day a dead non-human primate was discovered in a cage that had just been sterilized in a cage washing system.

“It is clear that the Harvard officials who are responsible for supervising animal research are not doing their jobs,” said Budkie. “How many more primates have died at Harvard due to negligence that we don’t know about?”

Another major incident at Harvard involved the use of animals in many unapproved surgical procedures, which is a violation of National Institutes of Health funding policy. SAEN has contacted the NIH to request an investigation and a grant recall/refund for offending projects.

The USDA inspection reports are available upon request from SAEN.