

January 13, 2009

Melissa Hodges  
8160 MRB III  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center  
21<sup>st</sup> and Magnolia Cir.  
Nashville, TN 37203

Dear Ms. Hodges,


I'm writing on behalf of my friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and PETA's more than 2 million members and supporters. I am a former Dallas Cowboys cheerleader and a current scout for the NBA, but my greatest passion is animal protection. I was therefore extremely disappointed to read about your work in an animal laboratory at Vanderbilt University Kennedy Center. You may not be aware of the indifference that Vanderbilt University has shown in regard to following even the minimal animal protection standards required by federal regulations or that Vanderbilt has been cited for dozens of violations of the Animal Welfare Act in the last three years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has found that animals at Vanderbilt have been kept in cramped cages smaller than legally permissible, which has caused fights to break out among stressed animals competing for space. Expired and ineffective pain-relief drugs have been used in Vanderbilt laboratories, resulting in immense suffering for animals who are cut open while still able to feel pain. In other experiments, no anesthetic of any kind was used. Vanderbilt has been cited on numerous occasions for employing unqualified and poorly trained staff; animals have been killed or injured because of employees' negligence and ineptitude. In one case, a rabbit was scalded to death when technicians failed to remove her from her cage before sending the cage through the high-temperature washer.

One experimenter, Jeffrey Schall, was suspended for a month after performing an unauthorized surgery and withholding water from a monkey. One monkey, named Lil' Wayne, died after going without anything to drink for seven days. Your supervisor, Christine Konradi, was involved in an experiment that consisted of addicting animals to cocaine, monitoring their drug-induced behavior, and then killing them by snapping their necks. The animals were then beheaded and had portions of their brains removed. It sounds like you may have even participated in this experiment personally.

As you continue your career in medicine, you'll certainly realize that, scientifically speaking, a mouse suffers just as much as a cat would when beheaded in a laboratory. Anything that can be done to avoid causing such suffering should be done.

Sincerely,

  
Bonnie-Jill Laflin