

32) Three media articles regarding the case.

Eric Sandgren: Cat research, after all the drama

FEBRUARY 16, 2013 4:30 AM • ERIC SANDGREN | UW-MADISON

Now that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has had its moment of theatrics in front of the UW Board of Regents, let's look at some pertinent facts about their campaign against UW-Madison research on sound localization.

In 2009, UW-Madison sent PETA over 1,000 pages about our research in response to an open records request. But we held back pictures we considered proprietary. After three years of legal wrangling, we agreed to release some of the pictures, and they now grace the posters carried into last week's Board of Regents meeting.

It wasn't until receiving the pictures that PETA bothered to take action about the cats in these studies. Yet, since 2009, PETA had full access to the complete description of all procedures, medical interventions, and improvements in human health we anticipated.

At any time during those three years, PETA could have made this information public. Instead, PETA kept quiet until they had pictures and the fundraising opportunities pictures provide.

From the start PETA has distorted the study. They claim falsely that the animals were tortured. What the pictures show is an animal undergoing surgery to receive cochlear implants. As in equivalent procedures in humans, surgeries are performed under anesthesia, and followed by analgesia. The animals adapt readily to the implants, which do not cause discomfort or distress. They behave like, well, cats.

Furthermore, in two separate complaints filed with the USDA, PETA accused UW-Madison of multiple violations of the Animal Welfare Act. When two comprehensive, multi-day investigations by

USDA veterinarians failed to substantiate PETA's accusations, PETA changed its tune and now says they don't care that the study is being conducted responsibly, they still think it's wrong. Holding that belief is PETA's prerogative, just as it is mine to believe the studies are important. But that doesn't excuse PETA's modus operandi in this case, which is to cynically smear researchers and others.

This leads to the crux of the issue, which is the question of why the studies are done. The studies seek to show how the brain receives and makes sense of sound, with a long-term objective of refining bilateral cochlear implants and allowing the wearer to localize sounds in his or her environment. This ability is vital to effectively follow conversations in a noisy environment. The work is done in a world-renowned laboratory that has significantly advanced the field of hearing research. Studies such as these provide and refine technology to help deaf children hear.

PETA dismisses the work, claiming we could accomplish the same thing using other methods. But no method other than these studies in cats can answer the precise question the scientists are asking.

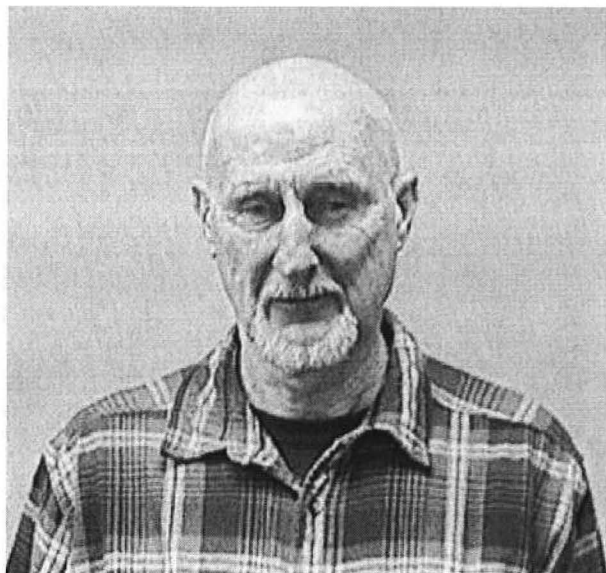
PETA says we do this research only for the money. Nowadays, with fewer than 20 percent of federal grant applications receiving support, only the best of the best make the cut. It's an honor to be awarded a grant, because that means other scientists believe your experiments are likely to be successful and important. Proposing work only for the money is the best way to ensure you will not receive any.

I am fond of passionate people, such as actor James Cromwell, who speak out in support of their beliefs. I'm that way too. I just wish they would take the time to learn the whole story.

Sandgren is director of the Research Animal Resources Center at UW-Madison.



Actor James Cromwell arrested in UW animal rights protest



FEBRUARY 07, 2013 4:45 PM • ROB THOMAS | THE CAPITAL TIMES | RTHOMAS@MADISON.COM

Oscar-nominated actor James Cromwell, best known for playing the kindly farmer in "Babe: Pig in the City" ("That'll do, pig") went to bat for another kind of animal Thursday morning at the UW System Board of Regents meeting and got himself arrested.

Cromwell, 73, and another protester from People for the

Ethical Treatment of Animals, Jeremy Beckham, entered the board meeting on Thursday, holding large, graphic photos of a cat named Double Trouble that they say was experimented on and killed by UW-Madison researchers.

"Shame on UW for mutilating and killing cats!" Cromwell yelled at the board, disrupting the meeting. Here's a video PETA provided of the protest.

UW Madison Police Sgt. Brent Gruber said university police escorted the pair out. Cromwell agreed to leave when asked, while Beckham passively resisted the officers by going limp. He was dragged from the room by officers.

The pair was taken to the Dane County Jail, where they were charged with disorderly conduct.

Cromwell also starred in films like "L.A. Confidential," and most recently was a cast member of the FX series "American Horror Story." He told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel that he has

supported animal rights causes ever since "Babe."

"These photographs were very powerful," Cromwell said of the photos displayed at the meeting. "It is something that can be seen that does affect people outside the scientific community and raise their ire, as it should."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture investigated the Double Trouble incident last year and announced in October that it had found no violations.

PETA had sent a letter to the Regents on Jan. 22 alleging abuse of nine other cats as part of research into cochlear implants, which are used to improve hearing, and asking that the experiments be halted.

Former Capital Times reporter Todd Finklemeier wrote extensively on the debate between animal rights activists and researchers last October, and whether any middle ground could be achieved.

Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]

From: [Name] (NIH/NIDCD) [E]
Sent: Thursday, September 20, 2012 6:34 PM
To: [Name] (NIH/OD) [E]; [Name] (NIH/OD) [E]; [Name] (NIH/OD) [E]; Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]; [Name] (NIH/OD) [E]; Brown, Patricia [OLAW] (NIH/OD) [E]
Cc: [Name] (NIH/NINDS) [E]
Subject: FYI: Wisc State Journal ltr to editor re: U Wisc. and PETA allegations

Note: Donata Oertel is an NIDCD grantee.



Donata Oertel and Peter Lipton: Harassment of researchers must stop

10 HOURS AGO • [DONATA OERTEL AND PETER LIPTON | UW-MADISON DEPARTMENT OF NEUROSCIENCE](#)

Almost everyone at some time receives medical care that improves the quality of life, extends it or even saves it. Health care is effective because the underlying causes of diseases are understood, often because treatments have been developed and tested on experimental animals.

Our children are protected from polio by animal research. The veterinary care of our pets and farm animals, too, has benefited from experimental work on animals. But the development of new treatments for humans and animals here in Madison is being threatened by the actions of animal rights activists, notably People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and their subsidiary, the Alliance for Animals.

PETA recently initiated a campaign against a University of Wisconsin researcher in the School of Medicine and Public Health and his colleagues, as described in the Wisconsin State Journal on Sept. 12. The complaints made by PETA allege that the research violates the Animal Welfare Act, when in fact it does not. Not only were these complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health, but reports were made to newspapers and posted to the Internet. Other animal rights groups have followed suit and have posted photos of the researcher and his colleagues along with inflammatory rhetoric.

PETA's charges did not come from any violations or citations of the researcher's animal care but arose through a "fishing expedition" from the release of medical care records in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. Those charges have now been thoroughly reviewed by veterinarians who were unable to substantiate a single one of PETA's allegations. Each charge arose from events that were either misunderstood or misconstrued.

A few examples illustrate distortion of the facts: The group interprets notes taken during surgery as the animals "waking up." Anesthesia in animal subjects, as in humans, is continuously monitored. When anesthesia becomes light, supplementary doses are required and administered, as was the case here. The PETA complaint also suggests that animals were not observed on a daily basis. They were, although not necessarily by veterinarians.

PETA also falsely states that invasive surgery was performed with inadequate anesthesia when on the day in question no surgery was performed on the animal. On that day the animal was lightly anesthetized so that its hearing could be tested as hearing is tested in human newborns.

The work at the core of this harassment directly benefits hearing-impaired people. The research has shown us how animals determine where sounds arise and how the brain measures differences in the time of arrival and in intensity of sounds at the two ears, which tells us whether sounds come from the front or side. This understanding demonstrates why people with hearing impairments benefit significantly from having two properly balanced hearing aids. The research also shows why deaf people benefit from receiving two cochlear implants that give them an enhanced, richer acoustic environment.

Widely recognized and respected in the biomedical research community, this research benefits hundreds of thousands of people who suffer from hearing loss. It is being mischaracterized by animal rights militants for their own purposes.

By spreading misinformation and outright falsehoods, PETA bypasses our system of justice and promotes harassment and attacks on the people and institutions that engage in important biomedical research.

Most biomedical researchers care deeply about the welfare of the animals with which they work daily. It is disheartening to see the public misled by an organization that supposedly champions animal welfare. Through the Animal Welfare Act, society has effective mechanisms to assure the welfare of laboratory animals.

We are all saddened by the senseless attacks on valuable biomedical research and the people who work diligently to improve human and animal health and our quality of life.

Oertel and Lipton are both professors in the UW-Madison Department of Neuroscience. The column was written by them on behalf of 65 UW-Madison faculty members.