

OHSU's primate center cleared following latest PETA claims

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

For the second time in 7 years, an animal activist group places an "investigator" in OHSU's primate center whose claims do not match the findings of independent, unbiased animal care experts.

PORTLAND, Ore. — Oregon Health & Science University has been cleared of mistreatment allegations by the animal rights group PETA. Following a two-day inspection, United States Department of Agriculture veterinarians have informed OHSU that they found no items of noncompliance and the university was given a clean bill of health. The inspection report, along with additional information about OHSU's care for research animals can be found at www.ohsu.edu/primatecenterfacts

“We are very pleased with the inspection report as it confirms our longstanding knowledge that OHSU takes very good care of its animals,” explained Daniel Dorsa, Ph.D., OHSU's vice president for research. “We thank Oregonians for withholding judgment on PETA's claims until they could be reviewed by independent, unbiased animal care experts. We also thank our animal care employees at the primate center for their continued hard work and dedication to the animals. I know that many of these employees were hurt and angered by PETA's claims. That is why we are so pleased with the quick and fair resolution of this matter.”

The USDA conducted its inspection following a formal complaint by the animal rights group PETA. During a November 13 press conference, PETA announced that it had planted an infiltrator at the primate center. PETA then made claims of mistreatment on behalf of their anonymous employee.

The USDA conducted the investigation because it is the federal agency which enforces the Animal Welfare Act, a large collection of federal laws to ensure animals in captivity are treated well. Typically, the USDA conducts two unannounced inspections of the primate center each year. This year's unannounced inspections happened to occur prior to and following the employment of PETA's infiltrator. Both of these inspections gave OHSU's primate center a clean bill of health.

In response to PETA's claims, a separate two-day inspection took place on November 26 and 27. OHSU received formal notice of their inspection results on Nov 29.

OHSU's primate center is a highly regarded national research center that has contributed to research breakthroughs in stem cell therapies, preventing premature birth, re-establishing fertility, combating obesity and battling AIDS and Parkinson's. The primate center's most recent breakthrough involved the successful reprogramming of skin cells into embryonic stem cells. The breakthrough received worldwide attention including stories in the New York Times, the LA Times, NBC Nightly News, CBS' Early Show and USA Today.

This is the second time in the past seven years that an animal activist group has placed what they describe as an "investigator" in the primate center. In 2000, a former PETA employee and current employee of In Defense of Animals took a job at the primate center and then made claims of mistreatment. In that case, a two-month USDA inspection cleared the center of wrongdoing.

In addition to regular unannounced USDA inspections, OHSU's primate center has an assurance of regulatory compliance on file with the National Institutes of Health and is accredited by the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care. In early November OHSU learned that the primate center received full accreditation and a glowing review by this organization which has accredited the primate center for an uninterrupted period since 1975.

A copy of the inspection report, along with additional information about OHSU's care for research animals can be located at www.ohsu.edu/primatecenterfacts

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