Every day, hundreds of thousands of animals, including cats, monkeys, rabbits and dogs, are forced to suffer in laboratory cages and undergo painful experiments.

The following ten examples illustrate the kind of severe suffering that these animals can experience behind the closed doors of university and company laboratories.

1. After three dogs were forced to ingest a test substance every day for five days at Charles River Laboratories, they experienced labored breathing and a high heart rate. They became cold to the touch, were not able to be aroused and were seen with the test substance in their mouths and on their bodies. One dog died and the other two were euthanized one to two days later. ¹

2. In the course of manufacturing Dysport®, an anti-wrinkle treatment, the Ipsen Corporation routinely performs a test known as Lethal Dose 50 Percent. The test involves injecting scores of mice with a powerful toxin in order to determine the dose that will kill 50 percent of the animals. The animals experience nausea and a wave of muscle paralysis, leading to severe distress as they slowly suffocate to death over the course of the three to four day procedure.

3. Following exposure to a lethal dose of radiation during a study conducted at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute—a U.S. military facility—a pig showed signs of organ failure, loss of appetite and depression; had chronic bleeding from injection sites and an injured tooth; did not want to stand up; and was seen with his head hanging in his water bowl with his nostrils submerged. After the on-call veterinarian failed to respond to a technologist's request to examine him to decide whether he should be humanely euthanized, the pig died overnight. ²

4. At Cornell University, laboratory personnel failed to ensure that woodchuck housing was safe, resulting in a woodchuck pup catching his front limbs in the bars of the inner door of an isolation cage. Both limbs were broken and, as a result, he was euthanized. ³
5. In a study of viral infection conducted at University of California, San Diego, eight infected guinea pigs were not humanely euthanized before they became hunched in pain, barely able to move, and lost their ability to eat and drink.  

6. At Virginia Commonwealth University, a rabbit was not removed from her cage before it was sent through a cage washing system. Cage washing machines typically reach temperatures of up to 180 degrees. One can hardly imagine the pain and distress she experienced as she was scalded to death.  

7. In a malaria study conducted at Emory University, a four year-old monkey was reluctant to move nine days after being infected; had signs of severe malaria; was not eating; and had a high heart rate. Ten days after being infected, he had pale mucous membranes, a severe heart murmur, severe anemia, and purple spots all over his body. Twelve days after being infected, he appeared reluctant to use his hands and developed gangrene on his fingertips and tail, which he was biting, a symptom of extreme distress. Fourteen days after being infected, the monkey was finally euthanized. This monkey’s symptoms should not have progressed to such an extensive state of suffering before euthanasia was employed.  

8. During surgery by unsupervised, inexperienced students at St. Lawrence University, a rabbit was inadequately anesthetized and was sitting up and kicking during the procedure. Surgery on an animal who has not received adequate anesthesia can result in extreme pain and distress.  

9. In a study published in a scientific journal, rats were placed in a swimming pool one at a time, and then, without any warning, an escape-proof wire net was placed over their body, forcing them underwater for 30 seconds at a time to create an experience of "underwater trauma."  

10. In a study of viral infection conducted at the Southern Research Institute, three monkeys suffered from rapid disease progression and died before personnel were able to intervene.  

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2 Event reported by Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare in June 2005  
3 Event reported by Cornell University to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare in July 2005  
5 Event reported by Virginia Commonwealth University to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare in May 2005  

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University of Kentucky Research Violations Cause Animal Suffering and Death

LEXINGTON, Ky. (May 19, 2011) — Amidst reports showing that University of Kentucky has violated federal animal research laws, The Humane Society of the United States urges the university to adopt a policy to ensure that animals in its laboratories do not experience severe pain and distress. Multiple requests for adoption of such a policy have so far been ignored by the university. According to the reports, the university’s violations resulted in death and distress of animals, including mice who were restrained for extended periods so mosquitoes could feed off of them, live animals who were found in the carcass refrigerator, animals who were thrown in the trash by mistake, and animals who starved when they could not reach food and/or water.

The HSUS learned of the university’s violations through inspection reports posted online by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the agency responsible for enforcing the Animal Welfare Act as well as documents received from the National Institutes of Health via the Freedom of Information Act.

“Seventy-five percent of the public opposes research that causes severe animal suffering,” said Kathleen Conlee, senior director for Animal Research Issues for The HSUS. “Especially in light of these disturbing incidents, University of Kentucky should publicly affirm its commitment to minimizing animal suffering in its research labs by prohibiting severe suffering altogether.”

More than 60 colleges and universities have adopted a policy ensuring that no animals in their laboratories experience severe suffering.

Timeline
A partial list taken from reports by the university to the National Institute of Health’s Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare and reports filed by of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

September 2010: Mice were near death or died when they were kept on a blood flow restriction study for an hour and 20 minutes longer than the time period approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

August 2010: Sixteen rats were found in poor condition after being on water restriction—a procedure that was not approved by the IACUC.

July 2010: Several rats became ill after receiving a diabetes-inducing drug that was not approved by the IACUC.

June 2010: One rat died after a graduate student performed unauthorized surgery on three rats to collect embryos when the protocol stated that the embryos should be collected after the rats were humanely euthanized.

June 2010: Anesthetized monkeys were being transported to a study on a cart covered with a blanket, and through multiple hallways accessible to the public—a method that may not comfortably contain the monkeys during the rigors of transportation to avoid injury or stress. The facility was cited by the USDA for failure to handle animals in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, behavioral stress, harm or unnecessary discomfort.
April 2010: Several mice died after they were implanted with dosing pumps that wound up restricting their access to food and water in the metabolism cages that they were housed in two days longer than was approved.

April 2010: Mice were injured and died when they were used as hosts for a mosquito feeding colony and were further subjected to prolonged physical restraint. This occurred at a field site in another country and the study did not have IACUC approval.

January 2010: Six monkeys underwent surgery and were euthanized without IACUC approval.

March 2009: Horses being used in an experiment were not provided with a shelter that provided a place for escape from bad weather conditions. The facility was cited by the USDA for failure to provide appropriate shelter from inclement weather to prevent discomfort to the animals.

March 2007- April 2009: On seven occasions, staff failed to ensure death of rodents following carbon dioxide euthanasia attempts and the animals were placed in the refrigerator as if they were dead.

December 2008: A mouse underwent surgery that was not approved by the IACUC.

May 2008: One of three mice was not found after they were inadvertently dumped in the trash during cage washing.

May 2008: Three mice died after receiving an unapproved oral compound.

May 2008: Two mice died after receiving tumor line injections intravenously rather than under the skin, contrary to the approved protocol.

February 2008: Four mice died and eight others were severely dehydrated when animal care staff did not detect that the cage rack was disconnected from the automatic watering system for a day and a half.

Facts

- In 2010, University of Kentucky reported to the USDA that they used 1,057 animals—including dogs, cats, hamsters, monkeys, rabbits, sheep, pigs, horses, gerbils, and guinea pigs—for research. University of Kentucky also uses mice and rats, but these numbers are not reported since these animals are not covered by the Animal Welfare Act.

- In July 2008, The HSUS contacted University of Kentucky asking them to adopt a policy that the animals in their laboratories would not be subjected to research or conditions that would cause severe pain or distress. The University has not responded to that letter or the five additional contact attempts made by The HSUS from September 2008 to August 2010.

- The USDA regulates animal research on some animal species under the Animal Welfare Act. The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare oversees compliance with the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals by institutions such as University of Kentucky that receive federal funds for animal research. Both laws allow animal research that causes severe pain and distress; therefore, simply following federal law is not enough to prevent severe animal suffering.

- University of Kentucky was awarded more than $83 million in federal research funds for FY2010. It is estimated that a large percentage of this money funds animal research.

- 63 U.S. colleges and universities have affirmed that they have policies preventing severe animal pain and distress.

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation’s largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the Web at humanesociety.org.