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# Measure L: Should pound animals be kept from labs?

## OPINION

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## Research doesn't need cats, dogs

By Nedim C. Buyukmihel

I AM A doctor of veterinary medicine, currently engaged in teaching and research at the University of California, Davis, where I am an associate professor of surgery. I have had 11 years' experience doing biomedical research using animals, including dogs and cats. Most of my work was funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Sacramentans soon will be deciding, through Measure L, whether their county pound should stop selling dogs and cats to research institutions (so-called pound seizure). Opposition to pound seizure is not opposition to science, as is unfairly being characterized by opponents of Measure L. Many responsible doctors of human and veterinary medicine are opposed to pound seizure even though they support biomedical research.

Biomedical research does not depend upon dogs and cats, particularly those from the pound. An estimated 90 percent of all animals used in research are rodents. Stopping the use of dogs and cats from pounds could not have the adverse effects that opponents of Measure L predict it would.

In a manner aimed at instilling fear into people's hearts, opponents bring up AIDS, childhood cancer and other diseases and strongly imply that passage of Measure L would prevent research into these diseases. Such statements are dishonest and unprofessional. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome is currently being studied primarily in mice and non-human primates, not dogs and cats. Cancers that affect children are primarily being studied in rodents. Essentially all the other diseases that are mentioned are being studied primarily in animals other than dogs and cats.

Opponents of Measure L muddy the issue further by claiming that animals from pounds were necessary for present medical advances. This may sound attractive to the uninformed, but the truth is that most medical advances have come about through humane research involving human patients with specific ailments. There is no question that animals also were involved, but their use was not the deciding factor leading to our understanding and treatment of these diseases. Opponents of Measure L are trying to rewrite medical history.

The reality of the situation is that "important and lifesaving research" is not being done using

### YES

dogs and cats at the various UC campuses. Here are just a few examples of the type of research that is being done: Male dogs were anesthetized and had their reproductive organs mutilated to study erection (done at UC San Francisco and published in the journal Urology). Also at UCSF, dogs were forced to inhale cigarette smoke to determine the effects of nicotine on the lungs (published in the Journal of Applied Physiology).

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At UC Davis, dogs had parts of their brains destroyed to determine the effects on their sexual behavior (published in the journal Neuroendocrinology, 1980). The list goes on and on.

Voters have been told that Measure L is not about pets and that only unadoptable animals are used. This is untrue. The ideal dog or cat used in research or teaching is one who has been socialized to human beings and who is docile and friendly. As researchers or teachers, we cannot allow our technicians or students to risk injury unnecessarily. That is why only the most tractable animals, and therefore the most adoptable, are chosen from the pound. Whether these animals currently have human guardians is irrelevant. They are pets by any common-sense definition.

There also is the issue of the quality of science when pound animals are used. Animals from pounds have an unknown genetic and medical history. You cannot do good research when you do not know these critical features of your research subjects, because numerous unsuspected variables

are introduced. With pound animals, it cannot be determined if variations in the research results might be related to prior medical history, genetic factors or degree of socialization. There is considerable, and increasing, published evidence that these factors can and do have profound effects on the outcome of almost all types of research, making extrapolation to humans or other animals potentially dangerous.

Opponents of Measure L are also saying that animals from pounds are vital in training UCD veterinary medical students to do surgery. They want to scare the voter into believing that without animals from pounds, it will be his or her own dog or cat that the student will operate on for the first time. This is untrue and unfair. Time does not permit us to teach our students to become competent surgeons during school. The minimal surgical training these students get virtually ensures that they will be operating on your dog or cat for the first time. It is not until after a surgical residency or practice with an accomplished associate that a student becomes a competent surgeon.

NEVERTHELESS, animals for surgical practice can be obtained from many different sources, some cheaper and more ethical than the pound. Several veterinary medical schools in this country do not use pound animals at all, and their graduates are on par with those from UC Davis. But rather than trying to develop a system of education that does not depend upon the pound, UCD continues to use and waste these animals, at the same time forcing students to kill them even if it is against their morals to do so.

What if Sacramento residents made a concerted effort to eliminate the overpopulation of dogs and cats? There then would be no surplus of pound-derived animals for researchers to use. Is it not an insult to the public's intelligence to suggest that this would sentence sick people to death or prevent students from getting an education? When my medical colleagues support pound seizure, there is a conflict of interest. They seem to want an inexhaustible supply of stray or unwanted animals. Yet this is the antithesis of the goal of every humane and compassionate person. I urge Sacramento voters to abolish the morally despicable and scientifically contentious practice of pound seizure.

# Without animals, medicine falters

Jim Branham is on the board of the American Diabetes Association, Sacramento-Sierra Chapter. Royanne Hollins is on that board and also a member of Incurably Ill For Animal Research.

By Jim Branham and Royanne Hollins

**T**HERE WAS a time — just a generation ago — when parents lived in fear of poliomyelitis and its nightmare images of children held captive in iron lungs.

Today, polio is all but wiped out. There was a time when smallpox mercilessly disfigured young faces by the thousands.

Today, smallpox has been eradicated throughout the world.

Both these frightful maladies were conquered through one common means: studies involving animals.

The list of major medical advances brought through the use of animals is a long one: the discovery and therapeutic use of penicillin, insulin, sulfa drugs, streptomycin and cortisone; the successful prevention of rabies, anthrax and rickets; the prevention of diphtheria, rubella and measles. And animal research has enabled major advances in the understanding of DNA, the development of cancer chemotherapy and corneal transplant techniques and modern surgical treatment of coronary artery disease. Likewise, biomedical research involving animals has fostered development of new techniques used by veterinarians in the treatment of injuries and diseases afflicting animals.

As far as science has progressed, however, there is much more to be learned and new members of the health professions to be trained. Yet, the need for animals in scientific research and teaching and in the education of medical doctors and veterinarians is being vociferously challenged.

On June 6, the citizens of Sacramento will vote on Measure L, deciding whether or not the Sacramento County Animal Shelter will continue to release unwanted and unclaimed animals — on the day they are scheduled to die in the pound — to local teaching and research institutions.

Animal activists would have voters believe that the issue is very black and white. They charge that the animals released are beloved pets, who have strayed from caring homes only to

## No

find themselves victims of unjustified scientific research.

The truth is that the nearly 20,000 dogs and cats put to death each year in the Sacramento County pound are not pets. They are abandoned and unclaimed animals.

The animal activists are using the pet issue as a front to achieve their real goal of putting an end to biomedical research.

Witness Massachusetts in 1983. After a quarter century of battling over pound policies, the biomedical research community in that

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state accepted the word of the animal activists that their only concern was the issue of pound seizure.

An agreement was reached that the research community would find alternative sources of animals and in exchange, the animal activists would not pursue any other restrictive legislation. However, within days of the repeal, large, costly advertisements were placed in the newspapers, including the Boston Globe and the New York Times, by the New England Anti-Vivisection Society and the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals with the following headline: "We won a major battle. Now help us win the war." In addition, numerous restrictive bills were introduced into the Legislature, including one that would prohibit all animal research.

Activists are guided by a philosophy that is close to being a religion. They fervently believe that modern medicine, which has often relied on animal models, is not only useless but is downright hazardous to human and animal health. They ignore all the medi-

cal advances and surgical techniques so common today that they are often taken for granted by a citizenry that enjoys unprecedented good health.

By exploiting the natural bond between animals and humans, they have accorded animals equal status with humans by claiming that a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.

Ironically, the animal activists' campaign to close the Sacramento pound can only harm the very animals they claim to love and want to protect. Losing access to pound animals would force teaching and research institutions to rely on costly alternative sources for animals such as commercial breeders. As a result, no animal lives would be saved if the release of pound animals were prohibited; in fact, two animals would die instead of one. Research and teaching budgets and ultimately the taxpayers would have to sustain the heavy increase in animal costs.

**F**URTHERMORE, purposely breeding animals for teaching and research when suitable pound animals are being euthanized makes little moral sense. In 1987-88, more than 25,000 animals were admitted to the Sacramento County pound. Of these animals, more than 18,000 were put to death. Only 4 percent were released to local medical and educational facilities. None of these animals were pets — they were held in the pound for at least five days and were made available for teaching and research purposes only on the day they were scheduled to die at the pound. In addition, any unclaimed animal with identification or evidence of recent ownership (collar, bandanna, tattoo, grooming) is not made available for biomedical research.

A coalition representing the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Diabetes Association, American Health Association, American Diabetes Association, the Sacramento-El Dorado Medical Society and the California Veterinary Medical Society opposes Measure L. They believe that prudent, humane, sensitive use of animals in biomedical research is essential to continued progress in the fight against many diseases in both humans and animals.

We all know that research must continue. Research benefits both human and animal life. Don't be fooled by the deceptive campaign being waged against us.

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