SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
(In association with R.S.P.C.A. England) Patroness: LADY Y.P. McNEICE

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

26 May 2010

Forum Editor
Straits Times Press

Dear Sir,

I refer to the article 'Uniquely Singapore lab mice and micro-pigs' (Sunday Times 23 May) which announced that new facilities will be set up at Lim Chu Kang and Tuas to breed 600,000 mice and rats annually and 200 micro-pigs for scientific research. It also mentioned that thousands more mammals such as mice and rabbits were imported last year for research and as pets.

Animals are sentient beings and therefore capable of feeling pain. As much as it may be 'critical to have a consistent and reliant supply of animals in research' as stated by a researcher here recently, from the animal welfare point of view, it is also critical to reduce the number of animals that endure endless pain and suffering daily in the name of science.

With the news that Singapore is expanding its role in lab animal research, the SPCA is concerned and interested to know how much advancement we have made or are making in terms of working towards the three principles (mentioned by NACLAR's chairman Professor Bernard Tan) on which animal research rests – replacement (using alternative methods where possible), reduction (in numbers used) and refinement (limiting their suffering). There has been no mention also as to whether the original guidelines on the humane treatment of animals in research (drawn up by NACLAR in 2003) have been improved upon in terms of standards for the husbandry and care of laboratory animals, which were found by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to be inadequate.

The SPCA acknowledges that animal experimentation has helped improve or save human life, but not without immeasurable animal suffering the world over. The industry should forever be mindful of this and strive to work towards excellence in seeking alternative research methods.

Yours sincerely,

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