



Animal Protection of New Mexico

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CHIMP STUDY REVEALS MORE NIH DECEPTION

Federal Tax Burden Increased for Chimps in Texas as NM Faces Job Loss

ALBUQUERQUE – Today the National Academy of Science’s Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its much anticipated report “Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research: Assessing the Necessity,” in the wake of months of heated debate about the future of 200 aging, ill chimpanzees in New Mexico. Rather than settling any disputes, the report underscores the need for a thorough evaluation of the entire NIH chimp research program.

The IOM finds, “most current use of chimpanzees for biomedical research is unnecessary.”

The IOM report also reveals serious inaccuracies propagated by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) during their arguments for moving the 200 chimps, survivors of long and difficult years in labs, from New Mexico’s Alamogordo Primate Facility (APF) to Texas Biomedical Research Institute (Texas Biomed).

“The NIH’s race to award Texas Biomed a September 2011 grant award, well in advance of the IOM report, to use the New Mexico chimps in research is outrageous and foolhardy,” said Laura Bonar, Animal Protection of New Mexico’s program director. The NIH had led the public to believe they would consider the chimps’ fate following the release of the IOM study.

According to the IOM findings, “the present trajectory indicates a decreasing scientific need for chimpanzee studies,” and prominent American chimp researchers, Drs. Thomas Rowell and Robert Purcell, testified in May and August 2011 about the steady decline in the use of chimps over the last five years.

Yet on August 31, 2010, the NIH’s **Dr. Harold Watson told employees at New Mexico’s Alamogordo Primate Facility they would lose their jobs because, “The need for research chimpanzees has stayed the same, but the population has decreased overall.”**

The IOM study clearly shows a large population of young chimpanzees at Louisiana's New Iberia Research Center, in apparent violation of a 1995 federal breeding moratorium.

Bonar continued, "The NIH has misled the public, and their recent grant award to Texas Biomed is a grotesque violation of the best interests of science, ethics, and prudent use of tax dollars."

Flo, the eldest chimp at the Alamogordo Primate Facility at 54, has a history of attempting escape from research facilities, cardiac arrhythmias, inflammation of the lungs and pleura, anemia, and seizures after years of being shot with high doses of anesthetics. Flo was used in a breeding program and mated with many males, eventually giving birth to four infants to have them taken away immediately or days after birth for research purposes.

The NIH had refused to permanently retire the APF chimps after seizing them from the failed and disgraced Coulston Foundation laboratory in 2001.

"A decade later, NIH continues to make decisions contrary to the health, welfare and interests of our nation," Bonar said. In September 2011 NIH awarded a lucrative contract to Texas Biomed to use the APF chimps in bone marrow and lymph node biopsies, cerebrospinal fluid taps, and sequential sedations. **Texas Biomed requested a minimum of annual 5% cost increases and 3% salary increases "to balance the budget which is currently well in the red."**

"What is now obvious is that retiring the chimps will free up funding for effective scientific research," said Bonar. Animal Protection of New Mexico estimates that the federal government could save over \$50 million over the life of the chimpanzees by managing the APF as a sanctuary for permanently retired chimps.

"The NIH cannot justify removing aging, sick chimps from New Mexico. The ethical costs are too high, the scientific benefits are not there, and it will cost taxpayers more money," concluded Bonar.

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PDF attached: Overview of Flo's Medical Records

JPEG attached: Flo, picture from Project R&R: Release and Restitution for Chimpanzees, following Freedom of Information Act Request from National Institutes of Health