

Eric Denayer

STATEMENT TO PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

(May 25, 1989)

Pennsylvania House Bill No. 873, Section 2(e), which concerns a student's right to refuse to participate in vivisection or dissection, holds personal significance for me.

I entered the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine because I wanted to pursue a career helping animals. I soon learned, however, that certain requirements of the veterinary school were in conflict with my moral code of not harming or killing animals.

Early in my second year, I was required to take a course in pharmacology, including an associated laboratory. The laboratory exercises used animals in a manner I considered cruel and unnecessary. One lab consisted of injecting mice with an insecticide and watching how they died. Another used a heart from a freshly killed guinea pig to demonstrate the effect of certain drugs on heart muscle. These labs demonstrated already well-known principles.

A group of us realized that we could not, in good conscience, participate in these laboratories. We went to the instructor to express our misgivings and to work out a mutually acceptable alternative -- one that would fulfill the course's educational goals without violating our ethical beliefs. Instead, we were quoted school rules specifying mandatory lab attendance and informed that no exceptions were possible because the labs were essential to the course.

Rather than accept this situation, we took our case to administrative officials. After weeks of delay, we were ushered into a meeting with Robert Marshak, Dean of the School at that time. Again we were quoted school rules, but now the Dean added his personal message. He told us that, with our attitude, we did not belong in veterinary school and that he wished he could identify people like us before we got into Penn. Finally, if we refused to attend the lab sessions, we could expect to fail the course.

The administration's threats so intimidated most of the students involved, that only Gloria Binkowski and I continued to refuse to attend the labs. We learned the course material from pharmacology textbooks, took the necessary tests, and waited for our grades. Although we hadn't attended the labs, the instructors gave each of us an "A" for the course. The following year, this course no longer included any animal labs; nor has it included one since.

At the beginning of our third year, Gloria and I were expected to take a required laboratory course consisting of four surgical sessions on two healthy dogs. In the first session, a dog is recovered from anesthesia following surgery; in the second session, conducted a week later, the same dog is killed. The third and fourth sessions repeat this sequence with a second dog.

Again we objected. We felt that it was morally wrong to kill or maim a healthy animal. Gloria and I approached the course instructor and asked to work with him on a mutually acceptable alternative. Our request was summarily dismissed.

We repeatedly appealed our case until we were finally offered a so-called "alternative." This consisted of killing four healthy dogs rather than two. These dogs, initially healthy, would be maimed as part of practice surgery, then killed. In addition, we would be expected to monitor other surgically maimed dogs during a short "recovery" period, after which they too would be killed. We were given an ultimatum: accept this alternative or fail the course and leave veterinary school.

Gloria and I appealed to the president of the University, hoping he would help us settle this matter in a non-adversarial way. Instead, we were both failed, barred from entering our final year, and faced with certain expulsion unless we re-took the course, under the same conditions.

At this point, our only recourse was to file a lawsuit against the University to preserve our right to complete our studies. After negotiations with the veterinary school, we were allowed to fulfill our surgical requirements with a morally and educationally acceptable alternative.

Gloria and I went on to complete our studies and graduate with our class -- in my case, with high honors. Soon after, we both obtained jobs practicing veterinary medicine.

Unfortunately, the resistance Gloria and I encountered is not unique. Other students who have asked for alternatives to animal labs have been threatened with academic penalties. In 1987 a California high school student went to court to preserve her right not to perform dissection. That year, because of her

case, the state of California passed legislation to protect high school students who object to classroom vivisection and dissection. Currently, a New Jersey high school student is awaiting the court's decision in a similar case. Some professional and college students have even abandoned their chosen careers because of the intransigence of their instructors and school administrators. Several years ago, a veterinary student left the University of Georgia after the school refused to consider her request for a humane surgical alternative. In 1987 a medical student at the University of Colorado requested alternatives to her dog lab; the instructor threatened to fail her. When a majority of her classmates signed a petition supporting her stance, these students were accused of academic misconduct. Finally, feeling she had no choice, she participated in the laboratory -- only to be so demoralized by the experience that she quit medical school.

What makes such incidents especially sad is that, in all instances, humane alternatives were available -- alternatives that develop the requisite skills. Because many students -- as well as their instructors -- seem unaware of these alternatives, I recently accepted a position as Curriculum Modernization Coordinator with the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR). The position involves identifying alternatives to the harmful use of animals in education and disseminating this information to students and faculty. Literally hundreds of anatomical models, patient simulators, films, videotapes, and computer programs are available that can substitute for animals

in the teaching laboratory. For example, I recently viewed an excellent videotape on the biology of frogs that can easily replace dissection. All too often, animal labs continue simply because that's how things have been done in the past. There is mounting evidence that neither dissection nor vivisection is essential to learning.

At the college and professional levels animal labs are becoming increasingly obsolete. A professor of surgery at Ohio State University's veterinary school uses a foam rubber pad threaded with slippery red ribbons to teach the hand skills needed in tying off bleeding vessels. Many physiology professors now employ computer simulations that duplicate cardiovascular, kidney, and other functions. A recent survey conducted by The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine shows that almost half of all medical schools now use no animals in training their students. If half of these schools can train competent physicians without animal labs, why not the other half?

In addition to being unnecessary to the learning process, animal labs have negative psychological effects on the students who participate in them. Beginning with high school dissections, these labs desensitize students to animal suffering. The teacher, viewed as an authority figure, seems to be saying "It's OK to destroy life." For many students animal labs are both unsettling and demoralizing.

Students who revere all life deserve support, not censure. I believe that the state of Pennsylvania should protect the rights of students whose ethical beliefs prevent them from

inflicting suffering. I urge you to support a student's right to refuse to participate in vivisection and dissection.

I also urge you to support the portion of House Bill 873 that prohibits the use of live animals to test cosmetics or household products.

Last summer, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals asked me to review conditions at one toxicology lab -- Biosearch, in Philadelphia. Having worked for several years in biomedical research, I am familiar with proper animal housing conditions. In addition, I have a Master's degree in industrial hygiene, with heavy emphasis on toxicology. Even with this background, I was not prepared for the conditions I found at Biosearch.

Gauze pads to be used for skin irritancy tests had been laid out directly beneath an air vent covered with thick deposits of dust and grease. Animal cages were covered with dried feces and animal hair. Guinea pigs were housed in severely overcrowded cages.

The chief cause of animal suffering, however, was not the housing conditions, but the toxicology tests themselves. Dying rats, subjected to the LD₅₀ test, lay among already dead cage mates. Many rabbits being used in a Draize test were clearly in pain. In each case, one eye was swollen shut and oozing pus. When we approached their cages, the rabbits shrank back in fear. When we held them to examine their eyes, they thrashed so violently that we were able to examine only one rabbit's eye closely. The membranes around the eye were severely swollen; the

cornea had become opaque with a large ulcer. As a veterinarian, I understood that the rabbit had been permanently blinded in that eye.

The tests I saw being carried out at Biosearch have no valid scientific purpose. The LD₅₀ was originally formulated in 1927 to standardize the concentrations at which dangerous drugs such as digitalis or insulin are administered. Today, more modern techniques such as chromatography are used to establish a drug's potency. In chromatography a mixture has its chemical ingredients separated out, usually by machine, so that these ingredients can be exactly measured. So the original justification for the LD₅₀ no longer exists. In addition, it was a mistake to believe that LD₅₀ tests on animals could accurately predict a chemical's toxicity. Such factors as a test animal's age, sex, breed, and living conditions all contribute to wide variations in the test's results. In any case, a particular species' reaction to a substance is often completely different from another species' reaction to the same substance--including, of course, that of humans. The LD₅₀ is all but worthless for predicting human reactions to a toxin.

The Draize test also fails to protect human health. Rabbits' eyes have different characteristics than human eyes--including a third eyelid, a thinner and larger cornea, and a virtual inability to produce tears. This means that in the case of some substances, the rabbit's eye will react more intensely than a human's would; in other cases, it will react less.

The LD₅₀ and the Draize do not protect human health. Nor

are they required by law. These procedures are performed solely to protect product companies from liability. Companies feel they will be best protected in the case of a lawsuit if they can say they've been using those procedures that have become standard in the industry.

Alternatives do exist. Chemicals can be applied directly to tissue culture to assess a substance's toxicity. Computers can predict toxicity based on a chemical's molecular structure. In addition, there is a test-tube alternative to the Draize -- the EYETEX system, manufactured by the National Testing Corporation. Finally, companies can use ingredients already known to be safe from years of prior use. Over 100 companies already manufacture their products without animal tests.

I urge you to protect both the American public and helpless animals -- by banning the LD₅₀ and the Draize. Animal suffering and a false sense of consumer safety are their only legacies. As members of the Pennsylvania Assembly, you can set an example for the entire nation by voting against practices that are wasteful, misleading, and enormously cruel.

Thank you.



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EDUCATION:

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
V.M.D., School of Veterinary Medicine (May 1988)
Clinical rotations and course work emphasizing small
animal medicine and surgery
Magna Cum Laude; Dean's List (1984-88)
Phi Zeta (1987-present)
Hill's Award for Nutrition
Editor-in-Chief, yearbook, School of Veterinary Medicine
Vice-president, Student AVMA
Vice-president, Student Chapter, American Association of
Feline Practitioners
Member, Student Chapter, AAHA
Founding Member, Student Chapter, AVAR
Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
M.S., Environmental Sciences (June 1984)
Graduate courses in Toxicology, Industrial Hygiene,
Radiation Safety
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
B.A., Biology (May 1979)
Photographer, The Daily Pennsylvanian (1976-79)

JOB EXPERIENCE:

Curriculum Modernization Coordinator
Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, New York,
NY (4/89-present)
Researching, teaching, and implementing alternatives to
the harmful use of nonhuman animals in education
Veterinarian
Berg Animal Hospital, Matawan, NJ (6/88-4/89)
Clinical practice, Small Animal Medicine and Surgery
Veterinary Nurse
University of Pennsylvania, Small Animal Hospital,
Philadelphia, PA (5/85-5/87)
Assessing and treating critically ill animals
Supervising veterinary students and student nurses
Clinical Laboratory Technician
University of Pennsylvania, Small Animal Hospital,
Philadelphia, PA (9/84-5/85)
Testing in hematology and clinical chemistry
Research Assistant
The Graduate Hospital, Philadelphia, PA (11/81-8/84)
In vivo and in vitro experimentation, Cancer Immunology
Clinical Laboratory Technician and Veterinary Nurse
University of Pennsylvania, Small Animal Hospital,
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Testing in clinical chemistry, hematology, and
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PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Board of Directors, AVAR (1988-1989)
 Member, AVMA (1988-present)
 Member, AAHA (1988-present)
 Member, Metropolitan VMA (1988-present)

PUBLICATIONS:

- "Effect of Compliment on Tumor Regression Caused by Hapten-Immunotherapy," by K. Arai, E. Dunayer, and H. Wallace, Federation Proceedings, 42, p. 685, 1983.
- "Effect of Neutrophil-Suppression on Hemorrhagic Necrosis of Syngeneic Rat Tumors caused by Hapten plus Anti-Hapten Antibody Treatment," by K. Arai, E. Dunayer, and H. Wallace, Proceedings, American Association for Cancer Research, 24, p. 236, 1983.
- "Augmentation and Inhibition of Lung Metastases by Manipulation of Primary Tumor Site," by K. Arai, E. Dunayer, and H. Wallace, Proceedings, American Association for Cancer Research, 25, p. 235, 1984.
- "Support for Closing of Experimental Head Injury Laboratory" (Letter), by Eric Dunayer and Gloria Binkowski, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 188:5, March 1, 1986.
- "Position Statement on Horse Racing," by Eric Dunayer, Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, October 1987.
- "Position Statement on the Use of Nonhuman Animals in the Motion Picture Industry," by Eric Dunayer, Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, November 1987.
- "Alternatives to Animals in Veterinary Education," by Eric Dunayer, INTERVET, 23:4, pp. 15-16, 1988.
- "Animals in Research" (Letter), by Eric Dunayer, Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 194:7, April 1, 1989.

PRESENTATIONS:

- "Hydrocarbon Exposures from Office Photocopiers," by E. Dunayer and L. Levin, annual meeting, American Industrial Hygiene Conference (AIHC), Philadelphia, PA, May 22-27, 1983.
- "Methods for Requesting Humane Alternatives," by E. Dunayer, annual meeting, Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, Atlanta, GA, July 1987.
- "Animal Rights and Jewish Ethics," by Eric Dunayer and Joan Margules, Temple Beth Ahm, Aberdeen, NJ, April 1, 1989.