

On Research...

Blogging about research issues at Ohio State University



[Home](#) [About us](#) [Research Communications Staff](#)

What we don't see . . .

Posted on March 12th, 2009 by earle holland

Any reasonable person watching last week's [Nightline program](#) on [ABC News](#) would have been suitably aghast about [its allegations](#) against the [New Iberia Primate Center](#) in Louisiana. The six minutes of hidden video allegedly taken from inside the country's largest primate research facility seemed to warrant the expose' treatment the reporters used.

The [Humane Society of the United States](#), one of the country's largest and best-funded animal rights groups, gave the video to the network to culminate [their nine-month "undercover investigation"](#) that they claimed showed abuse of primates. An HSUS operative supposedly had worked for the facility for the better part of a year, during which she said she took the footage.



As a result of the network airing, and HSUS' claims of abuse at New Iberia, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#), which enforces the federal [Animal Welfare Act](#), announced an investigation into the allegations. The [National Institutes of Health](#) and the [University of Louisiana](#), which runs New Iberia, will likely follow suit.



And that's a good thing! Research facilities that use animals in their studies have to comply with a stringent set of conditions, commonly referred to as "[The Guide](#)." Violations of these requirements rightfully can lead to sanctions and fines and, in the most severe cases, a curtailment of the animal use.

Responsible researchers and research institutions understand this and toe the line accordingly.

But while institutions have to adhere to accepted "best practices" in their

NAVIGATION

- * [Home](#)
- * [About us](#)
- * [Research Communications Staff](#)

RECENT POSTS

- * [A graphic misrepresentation . . .](#)
- * [Of ghoulies and ghosties and long-legged beasts . . .](#)
- * [A cascade of lemmings . . .](#)
- * [Not what Ben meant . . .](#)
- * [Of science, baseball, and cricket . . .](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

- * [OSU Research News on the Web](#)
- * [Research News on Facebook](#)
- * [Research News on YouTube](#)
- * [StumbleUpon](#)

WHAT WE READ

- * [Dot Earth — Andrew Revkin/New York Times](#)
- * [Framing Science](#)
- * [Health News Review](#)
- * [Knight Science Journalism Tracker](#)
- * [Real Climate](#)
- * [Science News](#)
- * [Speaking of Research](#)
- * [The Great Beyond](#)
- * [The Panda's Thumb](#)
- * [The Plainspoken Scientist](#)
- * [TierneyLab](#)
- * [WiredScience](#)



CATEGORIES

- * [Climate change](#)
- * [Environment](#)
- * [Physics](#)
- * [Researchers](#)
- * [Science Communication](#)
- * [Science policy](#)
- * [Space](#)
- * [Uncategorized](#)

ARCHIVES

- * [February 2012](#)
- * [January 2012](#)
- * [October 2011](#)
- * [September 2011](#)
- * [August 2011](#)
- * [July 2011](#)
- * [May 2011](#)
- * [April 2011](#)
- * [March 2011](#)
- * [December 2010](#)
- * [October 2010](#)
- * [September 2010](#)
- * [August 2010](#)
- * [July 2010](#)
- * [June 2010](#)
- * [May 2010](#)
- * [April 2010](#)
- * [March 2010](#)
- * [February 2010](#)
- * [January 2010](#)
- * [December 2009](#)
- * [November 2009](#)
- * [October 2009](#)
- * [September 2009](#)
- * [August 2009](#)
- * [July 2009](#)
- * [June 2009](#)
- * [May 2009](#)

work, the network and HSUS clearly don't.

Consider the following:

Much is made in the reporting of New Iberia's use of tranquilizer guns to sedate chimps at the facility. The video shows at one point an adult chimp being shot with a sedative and then, several minutes later, falling to the ground. The accompanying dialogue bemoans the possible injury the sedated animal might have received.

What is conveniently missing from the discourse is the fact that adult chimpanzees are so dangerous that this form of administering sedatives is considered a best practice by lab animal vets, balancing the anxiety of the animals with the safety of the human keepers.

People forget that adult chimps are six times stronger than adult humans, pound for pound, and can unexpectedly turn vicious without warning. The recent mutilation and near-killing of a Connecticut woman last month by a pet chimp is clear evidence of this risk, and similar incidents have occurred in recent years.

Also, plenty of the Nightline video – and HSUS' video online as well – showed rows and rows of primates in tiny, confining cages, emphasizing the animals' agitated running in circles and shaking of cage bars as indications of their deprivation. Frankly, the portrait the video paints may well indicate inappropriate housing, but the video alone isn't necessarily evidence of that.

Anyone who works with large primates – especially chimps – will tell you that when someone unfamiliar approaches the chimps' cages or enclosures, they will display aggressive and forceful activity, in essence, establishing their place in the hierarchy of dominance. Primates are "social" animals and their place in the pecking order is usually hard-won.

The video of the cages and such for some animals infers a physical restriction on animals which, when normally found in nature, have large areas in which to roam. What only the most attentive viewers will notice in those seemingly restricted areas are open "pass-throughs" through which the animals can leave the building and romp in large, spacious enclosures. A video provided by New Iberia several days after the airing shows acres and acres of such enclosures at the facility where animals get ample exercise.

Producers of the ABC segment evidently neglected to show those facilities.

Lastly, the program stated that neither university officials nor those from the NIH elected to be interviewed on air, instead providing written statements from which only a few words were shown. Who can blame them – or any researchers for that matter – for declining the opportunity to be grilled on air based on selective, edited video provided by an anonymous source?

What's frustrating about this kind of expose' journalism directed at science and research is not what is shown but what is omitted.



In this case, viewers are expected to take on faith the accuracy of the claims of the "undercover" employee, even though that individual used blatant dishonesty to obtain the video.

- * [April 2009](#)
- * [March 2009](#)
- * [February 2009](#)
- * [January 2009](#)
- * [December 2008](#)
- * [November 2008](#)
- * [October 2008](#)
- * [September 2008](#)
- * [August 2008](#)
- * [July 2008](#)
- * [June 2008](#)
- * [May 2008](#)

META

- * [Log in](#)
- * [Entries RSS](#)
- * [Comments RSS](#)
- * [WordPress.org](#)

RESEARCH NEWS WEBSITE



Viewers are also expected to assume what is shown is the whole truth while in reality, the fact that six minutes of video is offered without context and spans a nine-month period.

And HSUS, in releasing the material selectively to ABC far enough in advance that the network could produce a Nightline segment, was consciously acting on its own previously stated position opposing the use of animals in research. It was pure public relations – not news.

Some things may be wrong at New Iberia. But until the USDA, NIH and others complete bona fide investigations of the allegations and find evidence supporting the abuse claims, viewers should reserve their judgments. The real test will be whether, if New Iberia is cleared of these allegations, ABC will devote equal time to clearing the institution's name and looking more deeply at HSUS' allegations.

I won't hold my breath.__Earle Holland



Powered by [Bookmarkify™](#)

Tags: [Researchers](#), [Science Communication](#), [Science policy](#) // [10 Comments](#) »

10 Responses to “What we don't see . . .”

Anna // Mar 15, 2009 at 8:56 pm

My question is the following...if New Iberia is NOT cleared of these allegations, will YOU devote equal time on your blog to admitting that this story was true?

I won't hold my breath either....

[earleholland](#) // Mar 15, 2009 at 9:25 pm

Let's just wait and see.__EMH

bestuvall // Mar 17, 2009 at 2:01 pm

THANK YOU from all of us who have benefited from the research that is performed to save HUMAN lives.. as well as those of the very animals themselves. Veterinary medicine has made HUGE strides for the benefit of animal and humans .

the HSUS is an Animal Rights group who uses the donations it squeezes out of people (many who cannot afford it) to lobby .. that is .their main focus LOBBYING..

Let's see if any of these “animal rights” people will turn down a drug to save their life or the life of their loved one because it was tested on a chimp.. or other animal..

Linda // Mar 17, 2009 at 8:29 pm

Very well written!

Animal rights groups such as HSUS don't care about the truth, or the animals. I look forward to hearing the 'FULL' story so I can show others how these people twist the truth to get money and laws to restrict valid research that benefits all. ABC seems to have become the outlet for nuts with agendas rather than presenting balanced news. Shame on them.

Thanks for the insight so that those of us who are not in research can find out what is really going on!

Sheila in NJ // Mar 18, 2009 at 12:58 am

bestuvall wrote:

"Let's see if any of these "animal rights" people will turn down a drug to save their life or the life of their loved one because it was tested on a chimp.. or other animal"

We already know the answer to this one!

When Ingrid Newkirk (President of PETA) broke her wrist a year or two ago, she talked about the great [painkillers her doctors gave her. Hey, Ingrid, those were tested on animals! Given that you said about research on animals, "Even if it cured AIDS I'd be against it" (I paraphrase) don't you think you should have turned down the pain meds?

Furthermore, Marybeth Sweetland, former VP of PETA, has diabetes and injects insulin. Every step in the demonstration that insulin prevents high blood sugar depended on animals and the development of treatment for the condition — from the use of pancreas extract from animals slaughtered for meat, to the testing of the newest forms of insulin — everything has involved animals. Marybeth, what makes you so special that you should not be held to the standards you were preaching to the rest of us? If *you* can benefit from research involving animals, shouldn't the rest of us be allowed to do the same?

Laurella Desborough // Mar 18, 2009 at 8:33 am

It is no surprise that the video clips are brief and show very little. No doubt, that is all the HSUS operative could find. And, as to showing the large open areas where the animals could exercise and play, that would not fit into the HSUS agenda of NO ANIMAL USE. It is a shame that more members of the general public are not aware of this HSUS agenda. Thankfully, more are becoming aware. When the HSUS does an "undercover" video of ANY animal facility, one should take everything in it with a BIG grain of salt, as the goal of the HSUS is not the proper care of the animals, but the elimination of that particular animal use. Shame on HSUS.

Truth // Mar 18, 2009 at 9:58 am

The HSUS is champion of deceit. Many times Films of supposed Puppy Mills will do the same thing. Show the indoor enclosures stating the dogs have never seen sunshine , felt the touch of a human hand, or ever

stepped on grass. When in fact 99% of kennel buildings have indoor outdoor runs. With the indoor being temp controlled. Groomed dogs do not do that to themselves. A dog kept in a cage with no human contact would be fearful and feral. Especially with a HSUS stranger yanking them out of their home and throwing them on the grass . They also will have pocket videos and enter a kennel where too.. Dogs will get agitated circling, and jumping because a new person is around. The HSU now calls that cage crazy. When I owned a groom shop. On any given day all client dogs would do that if a stranger walked back in my grooming area. When they left they would calm down. The HSUS and others like them are not champions of abused and neglected Animals. They are money chasing, attention, and rumor mongers. They kill thousands of animals a year, by their own claim that number is in the millions. In facilities that are many times deplorable. Then have the gumption to try and label others as animal abusers and steal their animals. I think it is high time. Normal people take it upon themselves and volunteer at a local humane society with little pocket cameras. The outcome would not have to be staged or exaggerated. Because real abuse happens in these hypocritical facilities. I myself have volunteered for a local humane society. It was filthy, people did not care about the animals. and every single day they were killing more. So do gooders who feel they have to find abuse need to go where it is happening. The ASPCA and the HSUS. They kill everyday. The animals in their care poop every day and make is smell very bad. The Animals in their care also are very sad because it is like a jail in there and it is not nor never will be their home. Because in no time if they are not wanted they will be killed. If a breeder killed animals they could not sell or need it would be international if not world news. Stop the HSUS, PETA, and ASPCA killing fields

Suzie // Mar 18, 2009 at 12:33 pm

What is so disturbing to me is Nightline's slant into AR journalism. It's 'Enquirer' style stuff now. I used to think they were a legitimate news show.

HSUS is a conflict charity, looking for issues to exploit to get cash. Just as the Petland kennel expose showed old HSUS footage (and HSUS should have been prosecuted), the credibility of any of this is HIGHLY suspect.

The more of it I see the easier it is to explain to other people that HSUS is into money and the AR agenda, not animals.

Amy // Mar 21, 2009 at 9:29 am

It isn't just Frontline or HSUS engaging in these questionable investigative techniques, unfortunately. Thanks, Earle, for describing some of the ways in which a single POV is constructed to leave out important facts that "would only muddy the waters."

[AndrewBoldman](#) // Jun 4, 2009 at 8:07 am

The article on antibiotics are very good.

Discussion Area - Leave a Comment

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

« [The war continues . . . Of mice and men . . .](#) »

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY ■ WWW.OSU.EDU

© 2006, The Ohio State University | Enarson Hall 154 W 12th Avenue | Columbus, Ohio 43210 | 614-292-OHIO

This page is maintained by: [University Relations](#). [About this site](#).

[Contact](#)

If you have trouble accessing this page and need to request an alternate format, contact webmaster@osu.edu.