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Animal Welfare Act Violations at Ivy League Universities

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**A report from the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine
September 2011**

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REVIEW PROCESS

Research Misconduct Score

To rate Ivy League universities on their Animal Welfare Act compliance, PCRM developed the Research Misconduct Score (RMS). First, PCRM gathered Ivy League animal facility inspection reports from 2008 to July 2011 available in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) database. Combing through the reports, PCRM counted the total number of violations, repeat violations, and severe violations—incidents of unplanned animal death, injury, or malfeasance that could result in death or injury. Unlike APHIS, which counts similar events as a single violation, PCRM counted each incident separately to achieve a more accurate picture of each school's misconduct.

The Animal Welfare Act is the only federal law that applies to animals used in experiments. It sets standards for animal care. The standards are minimal and do not even cover rats and mice, the most commonly used animals in laboratories, or birds and reptiles.

Once Animal Welfare Act violations had been categorized and totaled, PCRM weighted each school's violations based on severity. Nonsevere violations were given one point, repeat violations were given two points, and severe violations were given three points. Research Misconduct Score values were calculated by adding the number of points at each school, and a higher Research Misconduct Score indicated a worse pattern of Animal Welfare Act violations.

Research Misconduct Index

To further describe Ivy League schools' misconduct and to highlight their misuse of public funding, PCRM calculated the Research Misconduct Index (RMI), a function of each school's Research Misconduct Score and amount of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant money.

To collect NIH funding data, PCRM used NIH's Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT) database to search for awards to each school and its faculty for fiscal years (FY) 2008, 2009, and 2010. In cases where a university's medical school was listed separately by APHIS from the main university (Columbia University, Cornell University, and Harvard University), the medical and undergraduate schools' funding amounts were combined. For the best estimate of how much money each university received specifically for research each year, only grants with the "research" funding mechanism were included; training, fellowship, construction, contract, and other miscellaneous awards were not counted, though some of these funds support the animal research examined in our report.

Preliminary FY2011 funding information for each school, also available via NIH's RePORT database, was downloaded and examined in July 2011 to find grants with the "research" funding mechanism as well. This method allowed the length of the funding period covered to match the length of time covered by APHIS inspection reports.

FY2008-FY2011 funding totals were divided by \$100,000,000 to calculate units of funding received by each school in a manner that produced whole numbers for the Research Misconduct Index. Then, each school's Research Misconduct Score was divided by its units of funding to calculate the Research Misconduct Index. A higher Research Misconduct Index score indicated a worse pattern of misconduct per amount of NIH funding received.

At-Risk Animals

In addition to determining the Research Misconduct Score and Research Misconduct Index, PCRM researchers reviewed each Ivy League school's annual reports to the USDA to find out how many animals are at risk at each school. These reports include each institution's number of animals covered by the Animal Welfare Act and classify the pain levels of experiments for which each animal was used. The sobering numbers below represent the total number of covered animals used by each Ivy League school from FY2008-2010. Though more than 47,000 Animal Welfare Act-covered animals were at risk during the reporting period, this is the only the tip of the iceberg because more than 90 percent of animals in research laboratories are not covered or calculated by the Animal Welfare Act.³

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