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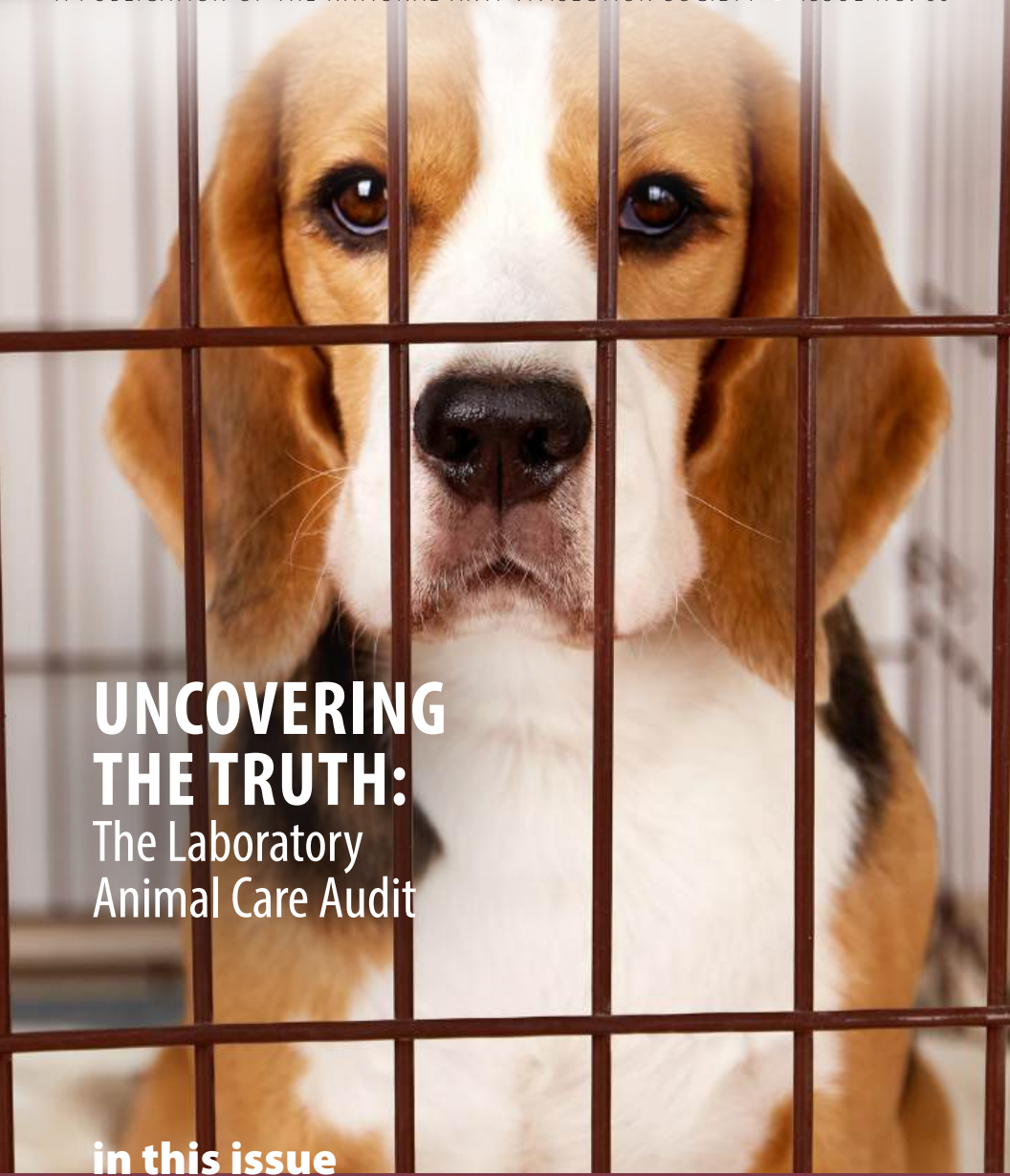

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH:
The Laboratory Animal Care Audit

in this issue

Why this audit matters, what it reveals, and how it can drive change for animals in laboratories.

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Why We Created the Laboratory Animal Care Audit

The National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) is committed to advancing science without harming animals. In line with this mission, we recently published the *2023 Laboratory Animal Care Audit* (LACA), a first-of-its-kind report detailing the living conditions and treatment of animals in U.S. laboratories based on inspection records from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This audit promotes greater transparency and accountability in animal research and sheds light on the experiences of animals in labs across the country.

While federal regulations under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) provide very limited protection for animals in research, violations of even these safeguards are frequent. The LACA details high impact violations at 90 laboratories in 2023, but total violations, including administrative violations, were documented at 245 facilities using animals that year. With 784 research facilities reporting animal use in 2023, this equates to a startling 31% noncompliance rate.

Our audit uncovered numerous examples of inadequate care, such as improper sanitation, poor housing, lack of veterinary care, and unapproved procedures performed on animals. In one California lab, three rabbits had to be killed after suffering fractured spines due to mishandling. In Oregon, a two-day-old monkey was killed after a cage door fell on it, causing a spinal injury. At a Georgia lab, seven cats were in cages so short they had to crouch to move. These situations reveal that laboratories fail to follow even the most basic care standards, often to the detriment of animals.

NAVS felt it necessary to release this audit for several reasons. First, although the USDA shares inspection reports with the public, the public search tool is primitive and not user friendly, making it hard to grasp the severity and scope of the situation. We wanted to present findings that clearly demonstrate patterns of neglect and abuse in laboratories to raise greater public awareness about how animals are actually treated in research and testing facilities.

Second, enforcement of the AWA is weak, in part because the AWA limits enforcement options for laboratories. Unlike other animal-use industries, laboratories face few consequences when they violate the AWA. Monetary fines are one of the few consequences levied against laboratories. However, the LACA report reveals that fines are so minimal that they are unlikely to deter future misconduct. For example, in 2024 Altasciences Preclinical Seattle, LLC was fined $5,000 to address violations dating from 2021–2023. With an annual revenue that exceeds $280 million, a fine of $5,000 is simply chalked up to the cost of doing business.

By releasing the *Laboratory Animal Care Audit*, NAVS aims to highlight deficiencies in the current system and advocate for stronger protections for all animals used in research. We call on policymakers, researchers, and the public to join us in demanding more funding for non-animal methods that benefit science for humans and animals alike. This audit is the start of our ongoing efforts to ensure ethical standards are upheld, with the goal of eliminating animal use in research altogether.

What We Don't Know: The Extent of Animal Use in Research

At NAVS, we want to fully understand the landscape of lab animal use in the United States so that we can identify the best ways to reduce reliance on animal models in research, teaching, and testing, with the goal of replacing them altogether.

Consider this: current animal use reporting requirements apply to an estimated 5-10% of all animals used in research, teaching, and testing because mice, rats, birds, and cold-blooded animals are exempt from reporting and welfare requirements under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

In the United States, despite calls for transparency regarding the use of animals in science, we still have an incomplete picture of the landscape of animal use in our country.

In the United States, we only collect information about animal use pertaining to dogs, cats, nonhuman primates, guinea pigs, hamsters, rabbits, sheep, and pigs. Our current reporting system then lumps together any additional AWA-covered animals into the category of "other animals," leaving it up to anyone to guess which kinds of animals, and how many of them, are in this category.

This contrasts with countries like those in the European Union, whose animal use summary reports contain information about many more animals, including mice, rats, birds, fish, amphibians, cephalopods, and reptiles as part of their reporting requirements.

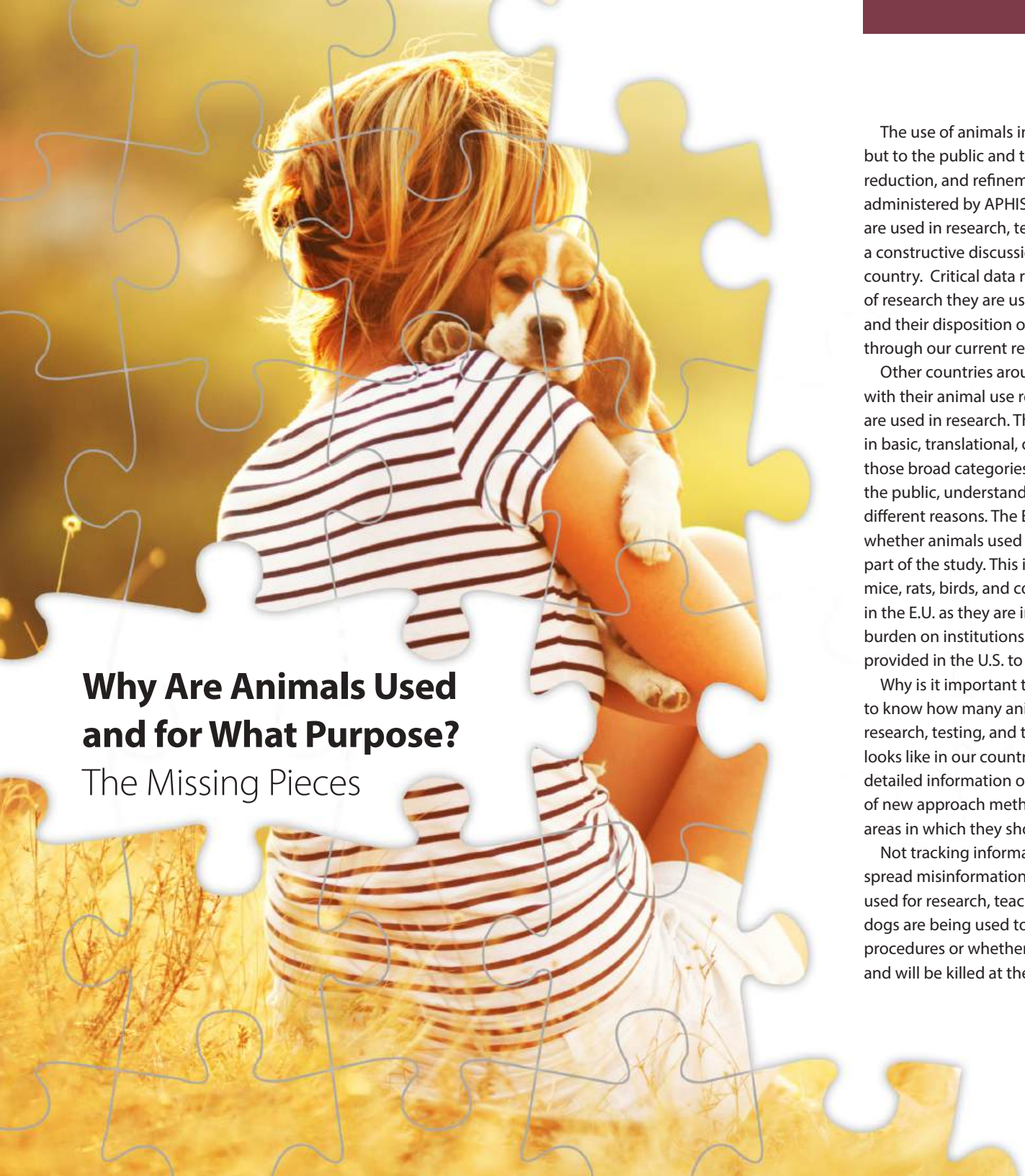
What information does the government collect for the animals covered under the AWA? Unfortunately, not much. The only information that is reported for the animal species mentioned above pertains to the number of animals that are held by research institutions (but not used for any experiments); those used for non-invasive research; those used for research causing pain or stress that received pain medication; those used for research causing pain or stress that did not receive pain medication to alleviate their suffering; and the total number of animals used. No information on how the animals are used—the actual purpose of the research—is provided.

Distressingly, federal agencies have backed away from even the limited forms of previously disclosed data. Basic information on animal use numbers and pain categories that used to be provided annually in a summary form by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is no longer published in this way. Now the "summary" is a giant disaggregated spreadsheet of data, with a list of institutions and their animal use numbers. Regrettably, the agency leaves it up to the end user (that is the public) to consolidate and analyze the data. Moreover, the summary is not published in a timely fashion. The most current year for which this summary reports is 2021. The result is that wrongdoing can be buried in a blizzard of data, and any wrongdoing that does surface is found years later.

Rather than wait for APHIS to publish this "summary," NAVS has been forced to use the USDA Animal Care Public Search Tool to manually look up each "Annual Report of Research Facility" form submitted by institutions using animals for purposes of teaching, testing, experimentation, research, or surgery, and compiling that summary ourselves. And because the USDA does not announce when new information is available, it is our duty to consistently monitor the Animal Care Public Search Tool for the release of this information. This is a painstaking, but important process, as we are eager to understand trends in animal use, even with limited and untimely data.

While we at NAVS are taking great strides to access and analyze the information that the government collects, and eventually reports, we can't help but feel frustrated that the data on animal use that we do acquire is lacking in many ways. Not only does the U.S. not collect and report on data for the animals most commonly used in research — mice, rats, and birds—but it does not provide any information on the purpose of animal use, whether animals were genetically modified, or if they are adopted out after being used in research.

NAVS has a long history of promoting transparency with respect to animal experimentation in this country. We often cite how other countries, like those in the European Union, have managed to provide much more insight into animal use. The fight for transparency in the U.S. continues.



Why Are Animals Used and for What Purpose?

The Missing Pieces

The use of animals in science is a matter of great concern, not only to NAVS, but to the public and those in the scientific community, as the 3Rs (replacement, reduction, and refinement of animal use) are implicit in the Animal Welfare Act administered by APHIS and the USDA. Without reliable statistics on how animals are used in research, testing, teaching, and experimentation, we cannot have a constructive discussion on how well the 3Rs are being implemented in this country. Critical data regarding how animals are used for research, what type of research they are used for, which animals are used for various purposes, and their disposition once research has been completed cannot be obtained through our current reporting system.

Other countries around the world, like those in the European Union, include with their animal use reports information on the purposes for which animals are used in research. There is an understanding of whether animals are used in basic, translational, or applied research or for regulatory purposes. Within those broad categories, there are many subcategories that help scientists, and the public, understand how many and which animals are being used for these different reasons. The E.U. also tracks from where the animals are sourced and whether animals used for these purposes have been genetically modified as part of the study. This information is collected for all animals used in science; mice, rats, birds, and cold-blooded animals are not omitted from data collection in the E.U. as they are in the U.S. This has been done without placing an undue burden on institutions in these countries, a fact that counters an argument often provided in the U.S. to justify why the information is not reported here.

Why is it important to understand the purpose of animal use? We need to know how many animals and which animals are used in different areas of research, testing, and teaching to get the true picture of what animal research looks like in our country and to track trends in animal use over time. More detailed information on animal use can help us better analyze the effectiveness of new approach methodologies that do not use animal models and prioritize areas in which they should be developed.

Not tracking information about animal use can also cause confusion and spread misinformation. For example, looking only at the total number of dogs used for research, teaching, and testing does not provide insight as to whether dogs are being used to train future veterinarians on how to perform spay/neuter procedures or whether dogs are being used in terminal drug testing research and will be killed at the end of the procedure.

Violations Within a System Designed for Oversight

At NAVS we regularly hear the argument from proponents of the use of animals in research and testing that the current system of checks and balances works effectively to protect animals used in experiments. They point to USDA inspections, which document violations and levy penalties like fines or staff retraining. They argue that these safeguards provide enough oversight to protect animals and that the system is functioning as intended. However, the findings we published in the *Laboratory Animal Care Audit* (LACA) reveal a very different reality—one where this functioning "system" features significant animal suffering and death.

The LACA report clearly shows that despite existing regulations and oversight, laboratories rack up numerous violations of the Animal Welfare Act, but animals pay the price.

If the system were truly effective in protecting the welfare of animals used in research and testing, such violations wouldn't happen at this scale or frequency. In many cases of documented violations, laboratories face only minor penalties, if any, and the issues persist. Financial penalties are often delayed for years, with some facilities in 2024 receiving fines for violations that were documented as far back as 2019. When consequences for harm are so distant and minimal, there is little incentive for labs to change. The existing "safeguards" do not prevent suffering, nor do they meaningfully hold facilities accountable for failing to protect animals.

This demonstrates that the system is broken. The fact that laboratories are permitted to operate despite numerous violations shows that regulations are not strict enough. Oversight is far from sufficient. A system that still results in documented harm and suffering to animals cannot be called a success. We need, and animals deserve, a new system—one that prioritizes the welfare of animals and ensures meaningful consequences for those who fail to meet basic standards. The LACA report makes this clear: the status quo is unacceptable, and reform is urgently needed.

The USDA's Reporting System: Who Is Watching the Watchdog?

The USDA's role in overseeing laboratories that use animals under the Animal Welfare Act is vital for ensuring animal welfare. However, a closer look at the USDA's oversight practices reveals serious shortcomings that minimize scrutiny and reduce accountability for animal experimenters.

One major issue is how the USDA records violations during inspections. Consider this scenario: If a person outside of a laboratory mistreats four dogs and the animals die as a result, that individual will be charged with four counts of animal cruelty. In comparison, when multiple baboons were injured due to poor housing facilities that allowed cages to come loose and move at a lab in Maryland, that facility received one violation. This practice obscures the true extent of harm and allows laboratories to appear more compliant than they are. A separate violation should be recorded for every animal that suffers inadequate care to better reflect the gravity of these failures.

Additionally, the USDA's enforcement process is often delayed, weakening its impact. Labs that violate the AWA can operate for years without penalty. For example, some fines issued in 2024 were for violations dating back to 2019. These enforcement delays undermine accountability, as labs face no immediate consequences for harming animals. Timely penalties are essential to drive real change in laboratory practices.

Compounding these issues is the poor user experience of the USDA's inspection report search tool. While technically available, the tool is difficult to navigate and lacks basic search tools such as filters that would help users compile information efficiently. This makes it hard to identify patterns or violations quickly, hindering transparency. The USDA must prioritize making reports easily searchable for public accountability.

Together, these practices—underreporting violations, delayed penalties, and limited public access—protect animal research facilities from full accountability. For meaningful change, the USDA must improve how it reports violations, enforce meaningful penalties promptly, and enhance public access to information. Only then can we expect laboratories to uphold higher standards of care.

What Went Into Creating the LACA?

Creating the LACA report was a meticulous labor of love. We wanted the report to illuminate the conditions that laboratory animals are kept in and raise awareness of and draw attention to their everyday reality. With that goal in mind, we got to work scouring the web to find information.

The LACA report compiles 2023 data from three separate sources to provide a concise overview of how laboratories violated the Animal Welfare Act that year; how many AWA-covered animals were used for research, teaching, and testing at those laboratories; and if the laboratories faced any consequences for their violations.

USDA Inspection Reports

NAVS mined USDA Animal Care Inspection Reports from https://aphis.my.site.com/PublicSearchTool/s/inspection-reports to find violations related to the living conditions and basic treatment of animals in laboratories in 2023. For this audit, we focused on violations that highlight the everyday experiences of animals kept in laboratories. We did not include administrative violations, even though those violations often can and do lead to poor animal welfare.

USDA Annual Reports

The LACA report also contains information obtained from annual reports that laboratories are required to submit to the USDA. The reports can be found here: https://aphis.my.site.com/PublicSearchTool/s/annual-reports. Annual reports provide a count of the number of dogs, cats, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, nonhuman primates, pigs, sheep, and "other animals" that are housed or used for research, teaching, or testing purposes. The annual reports also categorize the number of animals used according to USDA-defined pain categories, which sheds additional light on the level of distress lab animals endure.

Enforcement Actions

If a laboratory received any sort of punishment for violations of the Animal Welfare Act in 2023, those reports are found here: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-care/awa-services/animal-welfare-horse-protection-actions. This website shares settlement agreements, administrative complaints, and decisions and orders from the Office of the Administrative Law Judges and the Office of the Judicial Officer.

Even as we paint this picture of the lives of laboratory animals, so many stories are left untold. Because the Animal Welfare Act excludes mice, rats, cold-blooded animals, and invertebrates from its protections, these animals are not counted in annual reports nor included in USDA inspections. Despite our best efforts, we are simply unable to share the stories of these excluded animals because no one is required by law to pay attention to them.

By compiling this information, we aim to illuminate the serious gaps in animal protection in laboratory settings and to advocate for reforms that better prioritize animal welfare. The findings of the LACA report reveal that the current system is failing these animals, and it is time for real, meaningful change.

High-Level Overview:
What the Audit Reveals

The National Anti-Vivisection Society has assembled a report detailing Animal Welfare Act violations at laboratories that used animals in 2023[1]. The goals of the *Laboratory Animal Care Audit* (LACA) are to raise awareness of the conditions that lab animals are subjected to and encourage action to address concerns about the use of animals in research.

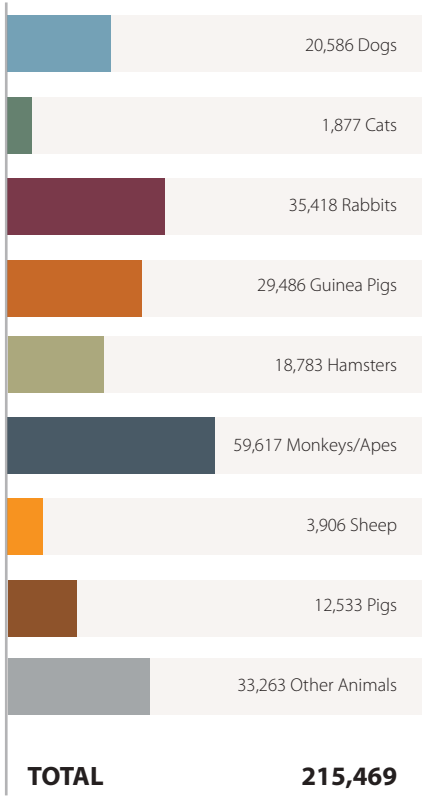
Report Highlights[2]:

- The report details violations found at 90 laboratories that use animals in 34 states.
- California has the highest number of laboratories detailed in the report (12). Texas (8), Massachusetts (7), and New York (6) are also heavily represented.
- Charles River Laboratories reported housing and using 46,694 animals for research and testing purposes in 2023, more than any other facility in the report[3].
- Thirteen of the 90 facilities (8.9%) detailed in the report have been issued a fine for 2023 violations of the AWA.

Common violations found during 2023 USDA inspections:

- Inadequate personnel training causing animal harm and death.
- Mishandling of animals resulting in injuries and fatalities.
- Lack of essential veterinary care, including failure to provide pain relief.
- Poor sanitation and waste management practices.
- Conducting unapproved experimental procedures on animals.
- Animals escaping enclosures and sustaining injuries.
- Insufficient housing for various species, from hamsters to horses.

In 2023, the laboratories detailed in LACA were responsible for the care of:



[1]Data gathering only included facilities registered by the USDA.
[2]All data is publicly available through the USDA website and includes information from USDA inspection reports and FY2023 annual reports.

Excerpts from the 2023 Laboratory Animal Welfare Audit

Western Maricopa Education Center, Arizona
A student witnessed another student slap a 1-year-old Staffordshire terrier named Harold across the head during handling activities.

Amphastar Laboratories Inc., California
Three rabbits suffered spinal fractures while being handled by staff, resulting in the veterinarian killing all three rabbits.

Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation, California
A pig was anesthetized for about 30 minutes when the vet left a technician to oversee it. After five minutes the vet returned and attempted to revive the pig without success. The vet stated, "Pigs are sensitive to anesthesia, and it is not uncommon for incidents like this to occur."

University of California at Davis, California
Two monkeys were being transported for an experiment. Upon arrival at the receiving building, one monkey was left in the van. During a check of the monkey in the van, she was found unresponsive, never regained consciousness, and was ultimately killed.

Bronco Research Services, Colorado
One Beagle identified as "4571542" got part of its foot stuck between the slats in the cage flooring and began vocalizing. Per a facility representative, this has been seen before with Beagles.

Emory University, Georgia
A 2-year-old monkey was found dead in an outdoor cage. She was found with her head inside a gap in the wall dividing two cages.

Fort Valley State University, Georgia
Seven cats were housed in cages that did not meet the 24-inch height requirement. Two of the cats were seen crouching to move around their cage.

University of Georgia
While under anesthesia, a dog suffered an injury when an electrical current that should have been paused during the experiment was instead given continuously. The dog was limping the following day and was found to have third-degree burns on a forelimb that required surgical intervention.

University of Illinois at Chicago
A female baboon showed signs of dehydration, including open mouth breathing and loss of muscle control. The baboon was ultimately killed. The cause of dehydration was a water valve malfunction that went unnoticed.

Tulane University, Louisiana
Pieces of rodent bait were found inside of animal enclosures on several occasions, necessitating medical treatment for monkeys to prevent adverse effects of rodent poison.

University of Michigan
A lab member euthanized four rabbits but did not perform the necessary secondary method of euthanasia. A female rabbit that was supposedly killed was discovered alive the next morning.

MRIGlobal, Missouri
Two monkeys were killed after they received a test formula injection into their hamstrings. The test formula was supposed to be injected into the calf muscle. The animals were killed because they could not provide scientifically valid data.

Merck Sharp and Dohme LLC, New Jersey
A cage containing two guinea pigs was placed on a flatbed carrying dirty cages. The flatbed was then rolled into an autoclave, a machine that uses extreme temperatures to sterilize equipment. The guinea pigs died.

Oregon Health and Science University
A baby monkey was injured when a technician was trying to transfer the baby and its mother to another cage, and the sliding door between the cages fell on the baby. The two-day-old monkey sustained an untreatable spinal/shoulder injury and had to be killed.

Texas Biomedical Research Institute
A monkey had to have several fingers amputated after a caretaker lost grip on the guillotine door during cage sanitation, causing it to fall on the monkey's hand.

Altasciences Preclinical Seattle LLC, Washington
An employee was seen tossing a sedated monkey in the air and then catching it in her arms. On one toss the animal was not caught and fell to the floor.

What You Need to Know and What You Can Do

The *Laboratory Animal Care Audit* (LACA) shines a light on the systemic failings within animal research facilities across the U.S. The data gathered through extensive research paints a clear picture of suffering, neglect, and inadequate oversight. The key takeaways from this audit can guide us toward creating a future where animals are no longer subject to cruelty in the name of science. Here's what you need to know and how you can take action:

- **Rampant Noncompliance:** Despite regulations, violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) are widespread. More than 31% of laboratories violate these basic care standards. These violations range from improper sanitation to lack of veterinary care and unapproved procedures, resulting in animal injuries and deaths.
- **Minimal Enforcement:** The current enforcement system is weak. The fines imposed are often too low and delayed, doing little to encourage reform.
- **Opaque Reporting:** Critical information about animal use is either missing or buried. The lack of comprehensive data makes it difficult to assess the full extent of animal suffering. The U.S. fails to track most of the animals used in research—especially mice, rats, and birds.

What You Can Do:

- **Raise Awareness:** Share this audit with your network. Spreading the word is the first step in building momentum for change. The full report is available at navs.org/laca.
- **Contact Lawmakers:** Urge your local and federal representatives to support more meaningful and transparent data on animal use in laboratories. Stay tuned to the NAVS Advocacy Center for opportunities to engage with your policymakers.
- **Support NAVS and Non-Animal Methods:** Donate to NAVS and help us advocate for the development of non-animal research methods that are more humane and scientifically advanced.

NAVS is committed to leading this fight, but we need your help to continue pushing for systemic change. Every action counts in building a future that advances research without animal suffering.

Why Creating the LACA Was the Right Thing to Do

The *Laboratory Animal Care Audit* represents a critical step forward in the fight for animal rights. It not only exposes the deficiencies within current laboratory practices but also aligns directly with NAVS' mission to advocate for humane, ethical science. Here's why the LACA is essential and how it supports the broader goals of our movement:

- **Accountability Through Transparency:** The LACA sheds light on the conditions that animals endure behind closed doors. By providing this information in a clear, accessible format, we are holding laboratories accountable and empowering the public to demand change.
- **Promoting Legislative Reform:** The findings of this audit underscore the urgent need for stronger enforcement of animal protection laws. By documenting the failures of the current system, we can better advocate for meaningful legislative reforms that prioritize animal welfare.
- **Aligning with Ethical Science:** NAVS has always believed that better science shouldn't come at the expense of animals. The LACA amplifies our call for the adoption of non-animal testing methods, which are more reliable and ethically sound.

In publishing this report, NAVS reaffirms its commitment to ending animal suffering in laboratories. The LACA, which will be published annually going forward, is an important element in our ongoing efforts to push for reforms, develop alternatives, and ultimately eliminate the use of animals in research.

By supporting this cause, you are helping to create a world where animals are treated with respect and dignity. Together, we can make cruelty-free science a reality.

A Legacy of Compassion Fulfilled

This past summer, NAVS was honored to learn that we were the recipient of a generous bequest left by a supporter and animal advocate, Karen Rhoades. "Peaceful Karen," as she was known to friends, was a lifelong defender of justice, especially for those who cannot defend themselves, especially the animals. Before her passing in September 2023, Karen took steps to ensure that her commitment to animals would continue long after her lifetime.

Karen's closest relatives preceded her in death, and she built a family of friends. NAVS spoke with them about their fond memories of Karen's love for animals. "She was a dog and cat whisperer for sure….one of those people whose calm presence invited a back or belly rub," shared friend Carol McKinley. While Karen's friends cannot be certain of what inspired her passion for animal protection, they believe it may have stemmed from a difficult childhood. Lynn Kimbrough, another close friend notes, "She knew what it felt like to be vulnerable, abused even, and what it felt like to have a stranger offer hope when things seemed hopeless."

Karen enjoyed a successful career as an executive producer for live radio talk shows. As a member of Colorado's Working Press, she was highly credentialed and went behind the scenes for all major events, earning various broadcasting awards for her work. In an era before cell phones and the internet, Karen was known for her

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unrivaled ability to secure interviews with some of the most sought-after celebrities of the time, including Betty White, Elizabeth Taylor, and Dolly Parton. Despite her success, Karen led a frugal life, never spending money on unnecessary luxuries. "She believed that you shouldn't take more than you need," Lynn remembered. "There is enough for all of us if we can move into a mindset of caring for the planet, each other, and especially the animals."

Karen's concern for animals in research started with a cat named Jack. Her own landlord did not allow pets, but when her neighbor adopted a cat who had been released from a laboratory, Karen fell in love. Jack wore the visible scars from his time as a test subject, but Karen saw only his handsome face. She helped care for Jack for many years and never wanted another animal to endure what he had suffered. Although challenged by her own health issues, Karen was adamant that there was a better way toward a cure and treatments than harming animals. Anti-vivisection was a personal cause for her, and she chose to lead by example.

"In going through her things after she passed, I found a record player that still had a record on it," Lynn recounted. It was an audio recording of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, an allegorical fable about a seagull who seeks to transcend the limitations of his flock by pursuing his passion for flight. The story emphasizes the importance of being true to oneself, even in the face of societal expectations. As a lifelong vegetarian, Karen defied cultural norms, extending her compassion for animals to include all species. Like the seagull in the narrative, she inspired others not through her words, but through her actions. "It is an amazing story and so fitting that it was on her record player," Lynn continued. "But more than that, Richard Bach [the story's author] also wrote, 'The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life.'" Indeed, perhaps it can be said that Karen embraced not just her dear circle of friends as family, but all creatures of the earth—a family in which she found not only respect and joy, but also love and purpose in life.

When asked what she felt others could learn from Karen's example, Lynn reflected, "Making a charitable donation does not happen by accident; it does require intention. But it really is a simple decision…to just share from your heart the generosity that lives inside you. If Karen's gift can inspire someone else to share their generosity on behalf of vulnerable and abused animals, then she will have the legacy she hoped for."

NAVS would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Karen Rhoades' "family" of friends, Lynn Kimbrough, Donna Latino, Carol McKinley, Karen Pitzer, and Kathy Walker, for their kind and generous assistance with this article.

Create Your Legacy With NAVS

A bequest to NAVS is more than just a gift. It is an enduring statement of your values and belief in a better world. Karen Rhoades' legacy of compassion will live on through NAVS' work. Her selfless spirit of giving will continue well beyond her lifetime, sparing countless animals from needless suffering, and shaping our shared vision of a kinder future.

Joining our Legacy Society is as simple as including NAVS in your own will or estate plans. Whether through a bequest, charitable trust, or other planned gift, your forward-thinking contribution will further our mission for generations to come. You will be part and parcel of the transformative work that leads to lasting change for the benefit of all living beings.

To learn more about creating your legacy of compassion with NAVS, please visit our website at www.navs.org/legacy, where you can access our free estate planning guide. And, if you have already arranged for a future gift to NAVS, thank you. If you wish to notify us of your intentions, we would be grateful for the opportunity to formally recognize you as an esteemed member of our Legacy Society family of donors.

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Without your support we wouldn't be able to fight on behalf of animals in research.
Thank you for being in the fight with us and for your ongoing generosity.