
ANIMAL ACTION

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Advocacy for Dogs: A Call to Action

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What science owes to dogs

Behind the lab doors

A future without animal testing



The National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) is dedicated to ending the exploitation of animals used in science.

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Dear Friend,

At NAVS, we believe that every animal—regardless of species—deserves protection, compassion, and a life free from suffering. In this special issue of *Animal Action*, we're shining a spotlight on one group in particular: dogs.

Dogs hold a unique place in our lives. As loyal companions and trusted family members, they are often seen as symbols of love and connection. Yet, thousands of dogs across the United States are subjected to painful, invasive experiments, confined to research laboratories where compassion is scarce and their suffering is often hidden from view.

Focusing on dogs in this issue is not a departure from our mission—it is an expression of it. Our work to protect all animals from the cruelty of experimentation requires that we lift the veil on what's happening across species, one example at a time. By highlighting the use and treatment of dogs in research, we are opening the door to greater awareness, stronger advocacy, and, ultimately, meaningful change for all animals.

Inside, you'll read about the history of dogs in laboratories, the flaws in the systems meant to protect them, and the growing movement—fueled by science, ethics, and public support—to pursue better, humane alternatives. You'll also learn how NAVS is taking action through policy work, support for sanctuaries, and investments in scientific advancements that move us closer to a future where no animal is treated as a disposable test subject.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we can build a world where dogs—and all animals—are valued not for what they can do for us, but for who they are.

With gratitude,

Sally Draper
Executive Director



The Historical Betrayal of Dogs

For tens of thousands of years, dogs have been by our side. The domestication of the wolf into what we now recognize as the domestic dog was one of the earliest and most profound partnerships between humans and animals. Unlike other species that were tamed for food or labor, dogs became our companions, sharing our homes, protecting our families, and even being honored in art and literature.

Ancient civilizations revered dogs, recognizing their intelligence, loyalty, and emotional depth. Egyptian tombs

feature images of beloved dogs resting at their owners' feet. In Greece and Rome, dogs were not only protectors but also trusted companions, often buried with their humans as a testament to their bond. In China, small companion dogs were kept in the robes of emperors. Across cultures and continents, the relationship between humans and dogs was built on mutual trust and care.

But somewhere along the way, that trust was broken.



The Betrayal: Turning Dogs into Test Subjects

A turning point came with the rise of modern science. The Enlightenment brought advances in medicine and biology, but with it came a cold, utilitarian view of animals. In the 17th and 18th centuries, dogs—chosen for their gentle nature and cooperative temperament—became convenient subjects for invasive experiments.

Early scientists, including René Descartes, believed that animals were incapable of thought or feeling, a philosophy that justified treating them as mere machines. Dogs, once revered as loyal companions, were now strapped to tables in laboratories, cut open while still alive, and subjected to agonizing procedures in the name of medical progress.

By the 19th and 20th centuries, the use of dogs in research had become widespread. The very qualities that made them ideal companions—trust, adaptability, and an eagerness to please—were exploited in laboratories around the world. Beagles, in particular, were favored for experiments due to their docile nature and manageable size.

Today, despite growing awareness of their sentience and suffering, thousands of dogs continue to endure painful experiments each year. They are force-fed toxic chemicals and subjected to repeated surgeries before their lives are deliberately and oftentimes unnecessarily ended—all in facilities hidden from public view.

This is the great betrayal: the transformation of our most trusted companion into an expendable tool for science.

Reclaiming Our Bond

At NAVS, we believe it is time to right this wrong. Science has advanced to a point where humane, non-animal methods can be used instead of dogs. The ethical and scientific justifications for using dogs in research are crumbling. But change will only happen if we demand it.

For thousands of years, dogs have stood by us. It's time we stand by them.



Dog Use in Research — By the Numbers

Dogs remain one of the most iconic symbols of loyalty and companionship. Yet each year, thousands of them are confined in research facilities—treated not as sentient beings, but as test subjects.

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 2023, nearly 47,000 dogs were held or used in experiments in the United States alone. These dogs are most commonly subjected to toxicity testing, pharmacological research, and surgical training procedures—many of which involve pain, distress, and little to no relief.

Who Are These Dogs?

Dog Source	Number of Publications	Number of Grants ^a
Commercial breeders	20 (21%)	68 (57%)
Other breeding colony	10	19
Client-owned (pets)	10	10
Client-owned and other	6	3
Breeder and/or other breeding colony	1	5
Breeder and primary cells or tissues from commercial supplier	2	0
Dog primary cells or tissues	9	0
Source not provided	39 (40%)	14 (12%)
Total	97	119

^aGrants were selectively provided and redacted by NIH, so grant data may not represent the exact distribution

Most dogs used in research are bred specifically for laboratory use. Beagles are the breed of choice due to their docile nature, adaptability, and size, but they are not the only breed used. Others include golden retrievers and boxers, although they are not as common as beagles or beagle mixes.



ANIMALS KEPT AND USED FOR RESEARCH, TESTING, AND TEACHING IN THE U.S. IN 2023*



16

STATES REQUIRE THAT
HEALTHY DOGS BE ADOPTED
AFTER RESEARCH

46,848

DOGS USED IN 2023

450

DOGS WERE SUBJECT TO
UNRELIEVED PAIN DURING
EXPERIMENTATION IN 2022

COMMON USES

MEDICAL DEVICE
TESTS

DRUG AND PESTICIDE
SAFETY TESTING

HEART RESEARCH



BEAGLES

THE MOST COMMON BREED
USED IN RESEARCH

DOG USE IS TRENDING UP



8ft²

ALLOWABLE CAGE SIZE FOR
A 33LB DOG IN A LAB



*APHIS ANNUAL USE REPORT

Global Snapshot

The use of dogs in research is not unique to the U.S. In countries around the world, thousands more dogs are used in labs each year. Yet, a growing number of nations—including the U.K., the Netherlands, and Germany—have begun phasing out or restricting their use, setting a precedent the U.S. has yet to follow.



Inside the Lab — What Dogs Endure

Behind closed doors, dogs in research labs endure a life far removed from the joy and companionship we associate with them. Deprived of normal social interaction, exercise, and enrichment, they often live in small, barren enclosures for months or years.

Typical Procedures

Dogs in labs may undergo:

- Force-feeding of chemicals to assess toxicity
- Repeated blood draws and injections
- Surgical implantation of devices for pharmacological testing
- Chronic sleep deprivation or behavior modification experiments
- Euthanasia at the end of experimentation

Even when pain relief is available, it is not always used. Under the Animal Welfare Act, experiments that cause pain without painkillers are still legally permissible if the research justifies it.

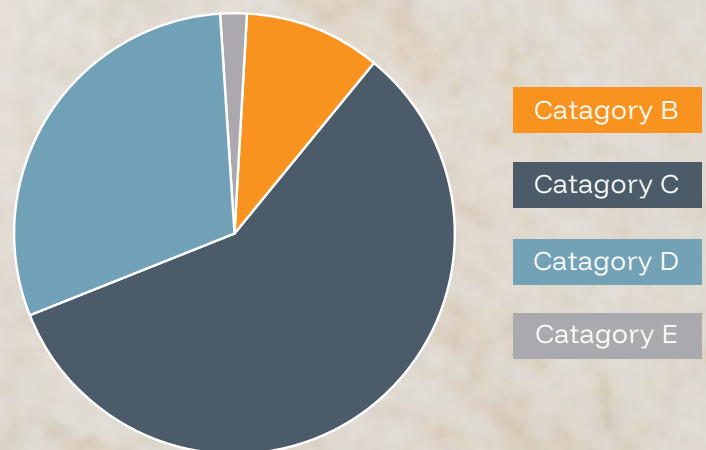


What the Law Allows

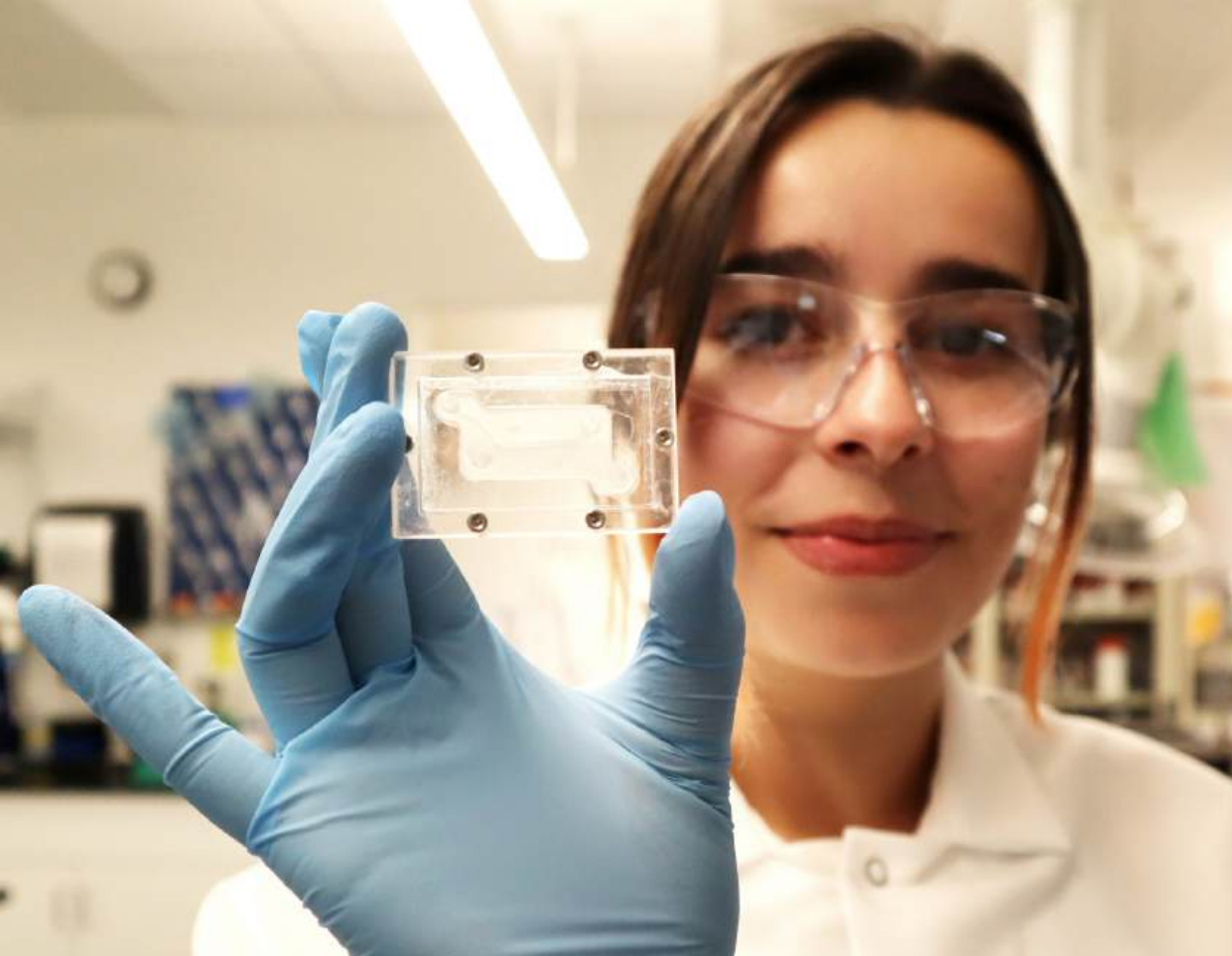
The Animal Welfare Act classifies animals used in research into categories based on pain and distress.

- **Category B:** Bred, conditioned, or held for use in teaching, testing, experiments, research, or surgery but not yet used for such purposes.
- **Category C:** No pain, or slight or momentary pain, no pain relief needed.
- **Category D:** More than slight pain, pain relief provided.
- **Category E:** Pain, but no pain relief given (must be justified).

In the chart below, you can see how dogs were used in 2023. The overwhelming majority of dogs used in research are subjected to painful, invasive experiments that often involve needing pain relief.



In NAVS' 2024 *Laboratory Animal Care Audit*, which details violations at laboratories across the United States in 2023, the facilities found to be in violation were housing nearly half of all dogs used in laboratories nationwide (20,586).



Current IFER fellow Filipa Maria Ribeiro Soeiro de Carvalho holds an “organ on a chip” as part of her project to advance women’s health without the use of animals.

The Science Is Changing. So Should We.

Decades of scientific advancement have made one thing increasingly clear: we no longer need to use dogs to advance human medicine. In fact, doing so may even hold us back.

Scientific Limitations

Dogs are not small humans. They metabolize drugs differently, have different immune responses, and often produce results that cannot be reliably translated to human patients. The consequences of this can be severe: treatments that appear safe in dogs may later prove harmful—or ineffective—for people.

“During our review of studies using dogs in research in the U.S, I was surprised by how often scientists failed to provide meaningful justification for specifically choosing dogs as research models. Relying on vague references to ‘historical data’ is not enough. This kind of reasoning keeps the research community stuck in outdated practices instead of moving toward more human-relevant alternatives.”

- Pam Osenkowski, Ph.D., NAVS Science Advisor and co-author of “Dog as the experimental model: Laboratory uses of dogs in the United States.” (*ALTEX*, 2022)

The New Frontier: Human-Relevant Science

Innovative methods such as organ-on-a-chip technology, 3D cell cultures, and advanced computer modeling offer safer, faster, and more ethical pathways to discovery. These technologies provide data that are directly relevant to human biology—without relying on sentient beings for experimentation.

How NAVS Supports Organizations Saving Former Research Dogs

The end of a research protocol doesn't always mean the end of the dog's life thanks in part to dedicated sanctuaries and rescue organizations and the support they receive from NAVS donors.

A Second Chance at Life

NAVS provides grants and emergency funding to organizations that accept dogs retired from labs. These dogs, often traumatized and unfamiliar with life outside a cage, require specialized care, veterinary attention, and patient socialization.

Meeting the Need

Many research facilities still choose to end the lives of dogs rather than rehome them, citing costs or logistical hurdles. But with NAVS' help, more organizations are stepping in to bridge the gap and give these dogs a chance to experience what life should have always been.



In 2024, NAVS stepped in with grant funding to help Beagle Freedom Project rescue more than 200 beagles in Oklahoma from lives of testing. That money was used to provide immediate medical assistance, spay/neuter procedures, and essential vaccines.



Advocacy in Action — Changing Laws and Minds

NAVS believes that legal protection for dogs in labs must catch up with public sentiment. Most Americans oppose the use of dogs in painful experiments—yet laws continue to permit it.

What We're Advocating For

NAVS supports state and federal legislation to:

- Ban the use of dogs in unnecessary toxicity tests
- Mandate post-research adoption for companion animals no longer used in labs
- Increase reporting transparency and enforcement of violations
- End the use of companion animals in experiments that cause pain or distress

This year in Colorado, we're proud to share a major victory for animals in laboratories: the passage of legislation that helps dogs used in research find loving homes once experiments have ended. More than 1,000 of our dedicated supporters in Colorado contacted their state legislators in support of this bill, and NAVS played a key role by providing both written and in-person testimony to help ensure its passage. With this win, Colorado becomes the 17th state to require laboratories to make every effort to adopt out companion animals used in research.

How You Can Help

- Contact your lawmakers and urge them to support humane science
- Share stories of rescue and reform to raise awareness
- Sign up for NAVS advocacy alerts and visit our Advocacy Center at navs.org

"Dogs are loyal, loving companions—not lab equipment. They deserve more than a life behind bars and an end on a cold table. It's time our laws, policies, and research procedures caught up with public values and recognized that compassion must be the foundation of science." – Meredith Blanchard, NAVS Senior Manager for Policy and Advocacy

IFER and the Future of Humane Science

NAVS' affiliated organization, the International Foundation for Ethical Research (IFER), is helping build a future where dogs are no longer used in experiments—because they simply won't be needed.

A Smarter Investment in Science

IFER funds graduate students developing innovative, human-relevant research that does not rely on animal models. By empowering the next generation of ethical scientists, IFER is changing the culture of science from the inside out.

While IFER-supported projects may not always directly replace dog use, they lay the scientific foundation that makes animal-free research possible across all sectors. Every breakthrough in organ-on-a-chip technology, every improvement in human-relevant models, and every student trained in humane science helps to eliminate the perceived need for dogs in experimentation. By reducing reliance on animal-based approaches overall, IFER is helping create a scientific environment where using dogs is not only unnecessary—it's obsolete.

NAVS' support of IFER is just one more way your generosity creates a kinder, more effective scientific future—for dogs and for us.



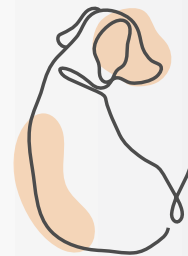
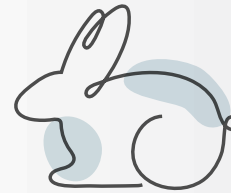
Inspiration for You

Recently, one of our amazing supporters was kind enough to share a poem they wrote that was near to our cause, and we wanted to share it with you in hopes that it might warm your heart, inspire you, and remind you of the worth of our shared mission:

I Do Not Find A Path

i do not find a path
but only see a road
a long road
where a little cat sits.... watching
a road of unknown distance
close to splashing water
on the side of flowering trees
breathing life
not destroying it
as man has done
still continuing
on a road of cruelty
it is no wonder
the birds hide so high in the trees
or the animals hide
on hearing a human voice
seeing what has been done
never knowing
if man will ever stop
i say to them
one day
man will respect all in the world
and when that happens
we will all heal
you will sing even louder
you will no longer have to hide
and i will join you in song

Written by Kathy Rutkowsky,
NAVS Supporter



The Borst Trust: A Legacy of Lifesaving for Dogs

The Trust operates under the stated purpose of providing for the care, protection, and general welfare of dogs. It was created in the Last Will and Testament of William Chalmers Borst of Denver, Colorado. Borst spent his career as a principal in the Denver public school system. He married a fellow educator, Ella Henry Borst, with whom he shared 17 years of marriage before her untimely death. The couple had no children, and Borst would outlive his wife by 27 years before his own passing in August 1955 at the age of 81.

With no direct heirs, Mr. Borst chose to dedicate the fruits of his life's labor to advancing charitable causes. Specifically, within his estate plans, he directed that funds should be dedicated to "help prevent any form of experimentation or other scientific research on dogs" whom he referred to as "man's most loyal and appreciative friends."

Today, Mr. Borst's intentions are upheld by U.S. Bank, whose headquarters are based in Minnesota, as the sole Trustee of his grantmaking foundation.

Since 2018, the Trust has been instrumental in NAVS' efforts to address the serious ethical and scientific dilemmas associated with dog use in research. These have included initiatives focused on advancing human-relevant testing models, exposing animal welfare violations involving dogs and other species in laboratories as well as regulatory failures to address them, and promoting the passage of post-research adoption laws to ensure more companion animals have the chance at life after the lab.

NAVS is grateful for the partnership of U.S. Bank in our endeavors and humbled by the opportunity to, together, fulfill Mr. Borst's legacy on behalf of "man's most loyal and appreciative friends."





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With your support, we can make progress towards a future where animals are no longer used in research. Thank you for being a part of that progress.

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