



Holiday Season 2010

Dear Friend,

Last summer, after a hard fought fight, we stopped the University of Guelph's Ontario Veterinary College (OVC) killing animals in their surgery courses. Thanks to your help, our victory immediately saved the lives of almost four dozen dogs and cats, and many hundreds of farm animals. Going forward, our success means that the University and the OVC won't kill over 700 animals every year, year after year, as they did in the past.

I didn't tell you, at the time, about the *other* organization fighting us.

It was fighting *for* the OVC and *defending* its reprehensible policy of killing animals used in surgery training – a policy that all other Canadian veterinary colleges and leading institutions in other countries had long abolished as unethical, and detrimental to good teaching.

It's an organization, funded with your tax dollars, that claims to guard the welfare of animals used by Canadian researchers. It doesn't. It guards the welfare of researchers. It "protects" researchers from people like you and me, people who care about animals.

Later in this letter, I'll tell you more about this secretive organization and our campaign to reform it or, if that's not possible, abolish it – a campaign that will need your help. It must be reformed or abolished, I assure you, because right now it is one of the major barriers to reducing the cruelty to animals used by Canadian universities, and the number of animals they use in often unnecessary experiments.

But first, in the wonderful, life-affirming spirit of this season, a time of reflection and gift giving, I want to thank you for the gift of life you've given to so many animals.

And, thank you, too, for your determination to protect the environment – an environment that we're all part of, and upon which we all, including the animals, depend for our very existence.

Please accept from all of us here at Animal Alliance / Environment Voters, *SAVED!*, a special "Thank You" gift: stories about some of the dogs that you and people like you helped save from the University of Guelph and the OVC.

*Please, enjoy the gift booklet, *SAVED!*; share it with your family and friends.*

SAVED! was made possible by Shelly Hawley-Yan, the director of AA/EV's *Project Jessie*, who spread the word about the plight of the OVC's animals. Within hours, loving homes were found for not only the 45 dogs OVC had planned to use immediately, but also dozens of other dogs and other animals held by the University of Guelph.

Many of the people who welcomed the animals into their homes sent us stories and photos of their new companions. *SAVED!* is some of those stories and images. It's also a testament to what people of compassion, determination, and generosity – people like you – can accomplish.

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We can all, rightly, take pride in saving so many animals, but our campaign to force the OVC to change its animal use policies for the better should never have been necessary. Never!

But, the campaign *was* necessary – in fact, it was *crucial*. Why? Because the University and the OVC were defended by the secretive, taxpayer-funded organization that claims it protects animals used by universities and other research and teaching facilities: the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC).

The CCAC boasts it is “the national organization responsible for setting and maintaining standards for the care and use of animals in science in Canada.” The official story is that in 1963 the taxpayer-funded Medical Research Council of Canada (MRC) asked the taxpayer-funded National Research Council (NRC) to establish a committee to investigate the care and use of experimental animals in Canada. Five years later, the NRC set up the CCAC. It became an ostensibly independent body in 1982.

The untold story is that the CCAC was actually set up not out of concern for animals, but out of concern for researchers and their funding. In the early 1960s, animal rights groups were exposing the appalling animal cruelty in Canada’s medical research institutions and animal testing facilities. Researchers needed to do “something” – anything – to convince the public, the press, politicians, and granting agencies that they were addressing the problem, and they desperately wanted to avoid government and independent scrutiny, and animal protection regulations. That “something” was the researcher-run, toothless, and secretive Canadian Council on Animal Care.

The CCAC sets minimal animal use ethical standards, and inspects animal research, teaching, and testing facilities. If an institution is in compliance with the CCAC’s standards and ethical guidelines, it is issued a Certificate of Good Animal Practice. A Canadian university must have a Certificate of Good Animal Practice to qualify for government funding and foundation grants for research that involves animals. In practice, every institution gets a Certificate of Good Animal Practice simply by going through the motions and paying lip service to the CCAC ethical guidelines.

When we started our OVC campaign, our first step was lodging an official complaint with the CCAC. Our complaint was that the OVC was unnecessarily killing animals in its surgery training courses, and that it was pressuring students to use and kill live animals rather than use the non-lethal alternatives on offer. We gave the CCAC irrefutable evidence to support both charges, proving that the OVC and the University of Guelph were not in compliance with either the CCAC’s ethical guidelines or its standards. We asked the CCAC to suspend the University’s Certificate of Good Animal Practice until it was in compliance with CCAC standards.

The CCAC found that, despite the irrefutable evidence, “the conclusion of our inquiry is that the use of live animals for training purposes at the OVC is evolving, and is headed in the right direction.” Right direction? The OVC gave the CCAC no assurances that it would ever end the unnecessary killing of animals in its surgery courses – a clear violation of CCAC ethical guidelines.

As for the evidence we submitted of students being pressured to use live animals rather than alternatives, the CCAC found,

“About undue pressure brought on veterinary students who do not wish to participate in live animal surgical exercises, the CCAC was that told that the number of such

students was very low, that these students had the option of taking alternative training to meet the OVC's learning objectives and that Dr. [Kerry] Lissmore [Associate Dean, Academic, Ontario Veterinary College] was not aware of any stigma attached to not using live animals nor any pressure exerted on students by College officials to use live animals."

That finding is particularly revealing. It confirms that the OVC offers alternatives to using live animals in surgical training, meaning the use of live animals was unnecessary. The unnecessary use of animals offends the CCAC's ethical standards and is sufficient cause, in theory, for not issuing a Certificate of Good Animal Practice.

It also confirms that the CCAC relies solely and uncritically on statements from institutions, and does not take into account evidence, no matter how irrefutable, brought forward by third parties. The veterinary students who complained about undue pressure, including one who threatened legal action to resolve her concerns, were never interviewed by the CCAC.

When we consider the CCAC's claims about it protecting animals, it's worth remembering that from the day we filed our complaint with the CCAC, it took us – people like you and me working together – less than 5 months to force the University of Guelph and the Ontario Veterinary College to overturn decades of unethical policies, conform to the CCAC's ethical guidelines, and end the practice of killing animals in its surgery courses. Why didn't the CCAC do this? Because, in fact, it's not in the business of protecting animals.

Typically, the CCAC took no measures to compel the University or the OVC to end their unnecessary killing of animals. In fact, the CCAC's sordid role in this affair was solely defending the University and the OVC, and their systemic abuse of animals.

Perhaps if the CCAC's lamentable behavior in our OVC campaign was unique, it could be forgiven. But, tragically for animals across Canada, it wasn't unique.

I know of no instance where the CCAC ever used its power to withhold a Certificate of Good Animal Practice to reduce the number of animals researchers were using or to diminish animal cruelty. Every independent report we have about the CCAC's activities and findings confirms that its role is to provide "animal welfare" camouflage for researchers, while avoiding any meaningful improvements to the treatment of animals.

For example, the CCAC claims it is committed to reducing the number of animals used in research. Yet, according to its own statistics, the number of animals used in research has steadily increased since its incorporation as an independent agency. In 1982, 1.9 million animals suffered the "tender mercies" inflicted by researchers, 2.3 million in 2005 (the last year for which the CCAC publishes comprehensive figures). The CCAC data is clear. It is not reducing the number of animals being used by researchers in Canada. The trend today appears to be increasing numbers. The last time there was a meaningful drop in the number of animals used by researchers in Canada was 35 years ago.

Of course, no one can actually trust anything that the CCAC reports or claims. It operates in total secrecy, as do those whom it is supposed to be overseeing. Even the token animal welfare representative from the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies sitting on the CCAC Council is required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Right now, over 60 animal protection and social justice organizations are working to get the University of British Columbia (UBC) to "fully disclose information about its animal research programs," including videos and

photos of its experiment. The little evidence available raises concerns that the UBC, which uses over 100,000 animals every year, is doing experiments that are unnecessary and inordinately cruel.

For example, one researcher has been working with cats for over 30 years, with no truly independent consideration as to whether the experiments are necessary. We do know they're cruel, however. An investigation by the "Stop UBC Animal Research" group which includes UBC students, alumni, and faculty, found that,

... the researcher described how he had cut open the backs of cats to expose their vertebrae. Titanium screws were inserted into the cats' spinal columns to inhibit movement. A restraint chamber was built around the cats' exposed vertebra to give researchers access to the cats' spinal columns and to fix the [still living] animals in a sitting position for recording sessions.

Not surprisingly, the CCAC defended the UBC, and gave no reasons as to why. In a letter to the Vancouver Sun, Clement Gauthier, Executive Director of the CCAC wrote, "UBC was recently assessed by the council's external peers, including public representatives, and was in compliance with council standards."

He was soon taken to task in a subsequent letter to the Vancouver Sun by Stephanie Brown,

The Canadian Council on Animal Care's Clement Gauthier writes that academic institutions must hold a CCAC Certificate of Good Animal Practice to receive research funding from granting agencies, but what does the certificate mean when all aspects of animal-based research – including the functioning of an institution's animal care committee, the assessment panels from the council that visit the institution and the council itself – are confidential?

Yes, there are public representatives on those committees. I served on the council, on two hospital animal-care committees and on CCAC assessment panels, representing the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. I was bound by confidentiality, unable to discuss animal experiments or decisions affecting animal experiments at institutions.

Believe me, it was frustrating not to be able to discuss publicly my concerns about conditions and experiments at the institutions, which are mostly funded with federal-government money

Is the system closed because of concerns about the public's reaction to what goes on in animal laboratories in Canada?

The CCAC system needs to be open, not confidential.

Of course, "the system is closed because of concerns about the public's reaction to what goes on in animal laboratories in Canada". The University of Guelph and the Ontario Veterinary College changed their policy of killing animals in surgical training because they knew it would never stand public scrutiny. For years, they'd been hiding behind the secrecy and "animal welfare" cover afforded them by the CCAC.

If the public is going to fund experiments that kill and inflict cruelty on animals, shouldn't it know what those experiments are? Or whether those experiments and the suffering they cause are even necessary?

From countries that have independent and transparent scrutiny of animal experimentation, we know that often researchers propose studies that are needless repetition of previous work or of dubious value. Often unnecessary animal research is proposed merely so that researchers can publish papers, however trivial or useless they may be, or to keep them and their grad students being paid. For this, they would make animals suffer and die.

There are no valid ethical or scientific reasons to justify Canada's animal researchers operating in secrecy and beyond independent scrutiny. And, we know from our University of Guelph / OVC campaign, and others, that the institutions and researchers operating in collusion with the CCAC cannot be trusted to develop and administer policies that protect animals.

As I say, the CCAC does not protect animals. It protects institutions and researchers from people who care about animals. We must either reform it, have it abolished, or fatally discredit it. Either way, we cannot let the CCAC remain the barrier it is now to saving animals from needless, agonizing cruelty and lingering death.

We start with a national public campaign – conducted in the press, on the Internet, and in Parliament – to expose the CCAC as the fraud it is. We need to strip away its credibility in the minds of those whom it was intended to mislead and deflect: the public, the press, politicians, and non-governmental funding agencies.

Then, with your help, we'll confront the CCAC itself, the universities it is protecting, the federal agencies that fund it, and the foundations and agencies that fund researchers who use animals. These are the concessions we want from them. With your help and financial support we *can* get them.

1. **Source of funding:** The CCAC is indirectly funded through Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Both agencies receive taxpayers' dollars. As such, funds must be publicly accounted for, and the activities of the CCAC open to public scrutiny.
2. **Freedom of Information:** CCAC must be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Currently, it is exempt.
3. **Full disclosure:** The CCAC must report which institutions are on conditional compliance, probation, and non-compliance. Currently, it only reports institutions in compliance. It must also report the number of animals used, the purpose for which they were used, and the level of suffering caused by the research.
4. **Mandatory compliance:** Compliance with the CCAC guidelines must be mandatory, not voluntary. Failure to be in full compliance must result in immediate suspension of Certificates of Good Animal Practice, not to be reinstated until all deficiencies are corrected. It is not sufficient to be merely "heading in the right direction."
5. **Council:** The CCAC's 28 member Council is dominated by researchers from the institutions the CCAC is supposed to be overseeing. The Council must be independent of the institutions subject to its scrutiny, and half its members, at least, must be experts in animal welfare. Currently, there is only one animal welfare representative on the Council – a mere token whose purpose is animal welfare "window dressing".
6. **Assessment Panels:** The majority of members on Assessment Panels, like the Council, should be animal welfare experts, not researchers involved in animal experimentation. The latter are unavoidably in a conflict of interest.
7. **Animal Care Committees:** The criteria in item 6 should also apply to university Animal Care Committees which are supposed to enforce CCAC guidelines.

Yes, this is an ambitious campaign, but that's what's required. I can assure you, we won't be alone in waging it. Across Canada, we can count on many dozens of animal protection organizations for help.

We can also count on the help of a few courageous scientists and other academics who are deeply troubled by what is happening to animals in Canada's universities. Some may publicly speak out. Others will choose to use our campaign to lobby for changes inside their universities.

But above all, the help we really need, particularly financial help, must come from you. Please, please give this campaign your full and determined support. I'm confident that if we can bring to this campaign all the necessary resources – human and financial – we can cut the number of animals used in experiments in Canada in half within 5 years. That's over a million animal lives saved every year, year after year after year.

I say 50% in five years because so many of the experiments on animals done in Canada that we've reviewed are truly not necessary. Do we still need to be observing the cruel effects of mustard gas on pigs – as our Department of National Defence is still doing? We've known how mustard gas kills people since it was first used near Ypres by the Germans in World War I over 90 years ago. There's nothing more to learn that's useful. Nothing. So, why cruelly kill animals with a chemical weapon for nothing?

It will take longer to help the remaining 50% of the animals, but we'll campaign just as hard – with your support – for their lives, too.

I implore you. Please join us in saving the lives of over a million animals every year. Help them with your generosity and your activism. We can do for them, with your help, what we did for the dogs, cats, and other animals abandoned to cruelty and death at the University of Guelph by the uncaring Canadian Council on Animal Care.



Yours sincerely, and for the animals and environment,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Liz White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Liz White
Director

P.S. On behalf of all of us here at Animal Alliance / Environment Voters – especially the Project Jessie team whose wonderful work is featured in *SAVED!* – have a wonderful Holiday Season. We look forward to a New Year of greater successes measured in the lives of animals saved and environments protected. All thanks to your compassion, determination, and generous contributions.