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New UK Law Allows Stricter Punishment of Animal Rights Extremists

On 31 January, UK Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt announced a new law to curtail activities of British animal rights extremists against British businesses¹⁻³. In her statement, Hewitt explained “This new law would not affect the important right to peaceful protests, while cracking down hard on those extremists committing crimes—and some horrific acts—against innocent people involved in the supply chain... Extremists are also ruining the lives and livelihoods of people and communities. This is totally unacceptable and our new laws will come with a maximum five year sentence. These measures will give firms and individuals the security to go about their everyday business⁴.”

The new laws, which come in the form of amendments to the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill⁵, will make it an offence “to use criminal actions or acts against civil law, with the intention of threatening or interfering in contracts or other commercial arrangements involving an animal research organisation”, and “to threaten someone with an unlawful act because they are connected to an animal research organisation, whether as a supplier, customer, or other associate, even at several removes⁴”. The amendments will not affect protests or action by organizations such as trade unions or product boycotts.

Almost 200 cases of damage to laboratory properties, and more than 100 attacks on private homes occurred in the UK last year⁶. This new law would give police more powers to apprehend attackers of businesses in the supply chain, company employees and their family members, charity shops and universities⁴. Persons who intimidate or cause economic damage to these entities

REGULATION UPDATES

NIH Proposes New Standards of Care for Chimpanzees

On 11 January, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) published a notice of proposed rulemaking to implement provisions of the Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance, and Protection Act (CHIMP Act) authorizing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop and publish standards of care for chimpanzees held in the Sanctuary system supported by federal funds authorized under the CHIMP Act⁷.

The proposed rule would add a new part 9 to CFR title 42 to “establish standards for operating the Sanctuary system to provide for the permanent retirement of surplus chimpanzees” and “specify the scope and specific standards that must be met by all contractors (primary and subcontractors) operating under the federally supported Chimpanzee Sanctuary system⁷.” To be considered in the final rulemaking, comments identified by RIN number 0925-AA31 must be received at NIH on or before 14 March. Comments can be submitted online at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

HSUS Sues USDA to Re-post Facilities Reports on the Web

On 27 January, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) filed suit against the US Department of Agriculture to obtain access to certain records concerning animal research facilities⁸. HSUS requested that the USDA provide, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), reports, including inspection and annual reports on USDA-regulated animal research facilities, that the USDA had posted on its website until 2002.

Although the removal of these documents from the web site does not preclude public access to the documents, the HSUS claimed that it takes years to obtain them by filing requests through the USDA's FOIA office, in violation of the law and in contrast to their immediate availability to the public when on USDA's website. Martin Stephens, PhD, HSUS vice president of animal research issues, said in an HSUS press release, “We would like to see the return of these reports to the USDA website to provide the public speedier access to the documents and allow for a timely follow-up on issues such as the identification of trends in painful and distressful use of research animals⁸.”

will be prosecuted and may be sentenced for up to 5 years in prison.

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