



caged and cruel



Supplement to the *RSPCA Counting the cost* report

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RSPCA position

The prime objectives of the RSPCA are to promote kindness and prevent or suppress cruelty to animals. With regard to laboratory animals, the RSPCA is opposed to all experiments or procedures that cause pain, suffering or distress. The Society adopts a constructive, practical approach, supporting and promoting development and adoption of techniques that will result in the replacement of animal experiments with humane alternatives, reduction of the number of animals used, substantial reductions in suffering and immediate improvements in welfare. The Society believes as long as animals continue to be used, every possible effort should be made to prevent suffering at every stage of their lives, not just during experiments but also throughout their acquisition, transport, housing, husbandry and care.

This policy and strategy applies to all laboratory animals, but the Society affords special concern to non-human primates (hereafter referred to as primates) because of their high level of development and their behavioural and social complexity. These factors in themselves make the use of primates in research and

testing ethically questionable. In addition, there can be serious distress involved in the acquisition and transport of primates, and the conditions under which they are kept are seldom adequate to meet their needs.

As a charity, the RSPCA operates through funds that have been dedicated to the public good. It therefore accepts that it has no powers to follow policies that would have a serious detrimental effect on mankind, and recognizes that it cannot seek a total ban on the use of primates when the current weight of scientific opinion is that their use is necessary for the purpose of alleviating human suffering. However, the RSPCA is committed to ending the suffering of laboratory primates and believes the necessity for, and justification of, all primate use should be much more critically assessed with a view to ending the use of these animals in experiments world-wide. While primate use continues, the Society calls for major improvements in the existing controls on primate acquisition and transport, and for breeding centre and laboratory conditions consistent with the behavioural, social and physical needs of these complex animals.

A new RSPCA investigation exposes the suffering involved with the trapping and breeding of primates in order to supply research laboratories in Europe. Video footage shows monkeys being trapped in the wild for a breeding centre on Mauritius and held in appalling conditions. Cages for the monkeys inside the breeding centre are squalid and barren – they fall far short of international guidelines on acceptable primate housing and care. Some of the monkeys display clear signs of anxiety and distress.

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These highly intelligent animals can experience pain, suffering and distress in similar ways to humans.



Primates in research

The RSPCA is deeply concerned about the breeding and import of primates for use in research. These highly intelligent animals can experience pain, suffering and distress in similar ways to humans. Yet around 3,000 – including around 1,500 imported from overseas – are used in experiments every year in the UK alone. The Society opposes the import and export of primates, and all other laboratory animals, because of the suffering involved.

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Primates are used in experiments mainly to develop and test the safety and effectiveness of medicines to treat conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, depression and anxiety, and to develop and test vaccines – for example against polio. Their use in research and testing can cause them a great deal of pain, suffering and distress. A serious ethical dilemma results when human aspirations and needs conflict with the needs of other animals.

The RSPCA seeks an end to primate use and the replacement of primates in experiments with humane alternatives. Until primate experiments stop, the Society believes every effort must be made to prevent or reduce suffering at every stage of the animals' lives, including during acquisition and transport. The RSPCA's specific concerns relating to the welfare impact of acquisition and transport are set out in detail in its report, *Counting the cost*, together with recommendations for urgent action. The Society believes a great deal of suffering can be prevented or reduced by the introduction of tighter controls on the trade in primates.





By using the offspring of wild-caught primates, the UK perpetuates the suffering involved in the capture of primates from the wild.

Cruel trade

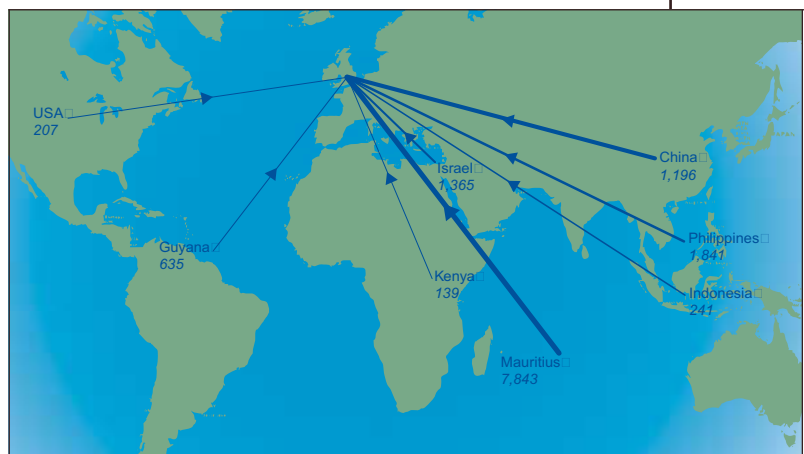
Thousands of macaques are imported annually to research laboratories in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, suffering long journeys of up to three days in crates barely bigger than they are. They come from breeding centres in Mauritius, Israel, the Philippines, Indonesia and China. The centres are often founded, replenished and augmented with animals trapped and removed from the wild. Capture from the wild in itself causes primates serious distress. Conditions inside breeding centres are seldom adequate to meet primates' complex needs – this too is a significant source of suffering. First-generation offspring born in captivity are later sold to UK research laboratories.

The RSPCA was instrumental in securing a 1995 ban on the use of wild-caught primates in the UK. The Society remains seriously concerned about the suffering involved in breeding and transporting primates for use in research, and in trapping wild primates to breed offspring for export. By using the offspring of wild-caught primates, the UK perpetuates the suffering involved in the capture of primates from the wild, even though recipient research laboratories may not be aware of this suffering.

Undercover evidence

A recent RSPCA investigation obtained photographic and video evidence that illustrates the suffering experienced by macaques trapped from the wild for an overseas breeding centre – Centre de Recherches Primatologiques (CRP) on the island of Mauritius. CRP supplies primates to Europe but not currently to the UK. Nevertheless, like CRP, some breeding centres that do supply the UK replenish their breeding animals with animals captured from the wild. Trapping cannot be done without causing significant suffering and distress.

The RSPCA also fears the conditions in which macaques are housed at CRP are similar for some breeding centres supplying the UK, such as those in China, and that furthermore even the clients of these centres may not know about the poor conditions. Undercover investigations like that carried out at CRP may be the only way the true conditions in which breeding monkeys are kept ever come to light. The RSPCA is submitting its evidence to CRP and calling for immediate improvements in conditions for the primates.



Principal exporters of primates to the UK for the period 1994 to 2000.

■ Desperately trying to escape a wooden trap.



■ Clinging for comfort in an alien environment.



The footage shows a wild macaque monkey trapped in a makeshift wooden trap baited with sugar cane.

Trapping

The RSPCA footage shows a wild macaque monkey trapped in a makeshift wooden trap baited with sugar cane. It also shows metal traps set around sugar cane plantations to trap large numbers of macaques for CRP. The trapping of free-ranging primates results in the highest incidence of mortality and serious injury of all stages of acquisition. Trappers are in the business purely for economic reasons and often have little knowledge or awareness of animal welfare.



■ Forced against a wall with no room to move.

Holding

Handling and holding conditions for trapped primates are often poor, and socially incompatible animals confined together may injure or kill one another. The footage shows two wild-caught female macaques in a wire holding cage on the floor of a building. There is straw on the floor of the cage but no drinking water or food is visible. The monkeys are silent and appear distressed by noise from surrounding human activity. One of the monkeys has a tiny suckling infant, which she attempts to shield from harm with her body.

IPS guidelines in relation to holding

- Newly captured primates must be given wholesome food, and potable water should be continuously available.
- Crates should be slightly elevated off the ground to allow passage of urine and faeces.
- Crates should be of adequate size to allow the animal to turn around and adjust posture.
- Animals should not be caged together except in known family groups, mothers and infants and young animals.
- Animals held in the field should be kept as quiet and undisturbed as possible.
- Holding animals in human dwellings must be avoided.

Two wild-caught adult male macaques are shown forced up against a breeze-block wall with wire fencing in a makeshift holding cage. They are barely able to turn around and struggle to try to escape. The wall is soiled, indicating that animals are frequently held in this way.

The International Primatological Society (IPS) has published guidelines on primate acquisition, breeding and care which set out acceptable standards of trapping, holding, housing, training for care-givers and health care. These standards are not met by CRP.

■ **Dead monkey in view of its group mates.**

■ **Squalid, barren and boring caging.**



Almost nothing is provided for the animals to do.

Conditions at the breeding centre

The main factor influencing the long-term wellbeing of primates is the conditions under which they are housed and maintained. Yet few countries with primate breeding centres have detailed legislation to control standards of housing, husbandry and care.

The RSPCA investigation's photographs and over an hour of video footage inside CRP show the outdoor cages of both breeding groups and groups of weaned infants. Some cages have floors and/or walls in poor repair with the structural material flaking away. One sequence shows a young macaque drinking from a leaking water device.

IPS guidelines in relation to caging

- **Caging systems should be kept in good repair to prevent injury or escape of animals.**
- **Particular attention must be given to eliminating sharp edges and broken wires, keeping cage floors in good condition, and refurbishing or replacing rusted or deteriorating parts.**
- **Watering devices, such as drinking tubes and automatic waterers, should be examined at least once a day to ensure their proper operation.**

There is widespread agreement among scientists that suitable environmental enrichment for primates is essential for their psychological wellbeing (mental state). All the cages visible in the photographs and video footage have little or no enrichment, such as perches or anything to swing and climb on. Almost nothing is provided for the animals to do. This is of particular concern, especially as some of the breeding animals may be confined in these conditions for 20 years or more.

IPS guidelines in relation to enrichment

- **Primate caging or housing systems should be designed carefully, with consideration to the physical, psychological and behavioural needs of captive primates as well as to meeting management and research requirements.**
- **Primates need a complex and stimulating environment.**
- **Novelty and variety, for example complex devices which can be manipulated and objects which are destructible, can also play a part in the relief of boredom and help to keep the primate active and alert.**
- **Destructible materials, such as natural logs and branches, can occupy the animals for long periods of time.**
- **Cardboard boxes, telephone directories, milk crates and heavy-duty plastic buckets have also proved effective.**

The video footage shows many of the monkeys at CRP are confined in cages with squalid conditions. Food pellets and local fruits are visible scattered among faeces. A group of old females can be seen feeding from a wet floor. Some animals have wet rumps and their teeth are badly diseased. Two photographs show different cages each with a dead monkey on the floor in full view of its group mates. This raises serious concerns about the frequency of monitoring of the animals, the level of staff cover, and the skill of staff in detecting signs of illness, injury, disease or group unrest.

The age at which infant primates are taken from their mothers can have a profound effect on their subsequent behaviour.



Premature weaning

Another video sequence shows infant macaques weaned into peer groups. Many are clinging to each other (a behaviour often related to anxiety) and sucking on the metal frame of their cages (a possible indicator that they are seeking oral stimulation in the absence of their mother's nipple). Weaning infants into groups without adults tends to promote intense clinging to social partners and delayed behavioural maturity.

The age at which infant primates are taken from their mothers can have a profound effect on their subsequent behaviour and welfare. Overseas breeding centres commonly wean macaques at only six months old.



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IPS guidelines in relation to weaning age

- **The young monkey should not normally be separated from its mother at an early age (three to six months) but should remain in contact for one year to 18 months in most species.**
- **Individuals weaned early are usually less adaptable and show higher levels of abnormal stereotyped behaviour.**



The RSPCA believes the welfare of primates at CRP is seriously compromised by the inadequate housing conditions.

Conclusion

The RSPCA seeks an end to primate use and the replacement of primate experiments with humane alternatives. Until primate experiments stop, the Society believes every effort must be made to prevent or reduce suffering at every stage of the animals' lives, including during their acquisition and transport. Recommendations for preventing or reducing suffering are set out clearly in the RSPCA report *Counting the cost*.

All those involved with primate use must ensure they are fully aware of, and give thorough consideration to, the entire impact of their work on the animals involved. This includes suffering due to trapping, breeding and transport.

The *Counting the cost* report and the evidence presented here have been submitted to the European Commission. The Society urges the Commission to recommend that relevant authorities in EU member states implement the recommendations in the *Counting the cost* report that apply to Europe. In addition, urgent action should be taken to end the use of wild-caught primates in the EU.

***Counting the cost* has also been submitted to the UK Home Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which have complementary responsibilities in the area of primate trade for use in research. It is vital that both departments implement the Society's recommendations in full.**

The RSPCA believes the welfare of primates at CRP is seriously compromised by the inadequate housing conditions and that immediate improvements are essential. In particular, the lack of suitable environmental enrichment causes the Society great concern, especially given that some of the breeding animals may be confined in these barren conditions for 20 years or more.

The poor housing observed at CRP highlights the inadequacy of implementation of current basic guidelines on primate acquisition, breeding and care at overseas breeding centres. There is a desperate need for a system of regulation and control of primate breeding centres on an international level.

Recommendations

- The RSPCA's photographic and video evidence forms part of a campaign to end the suffering involved with the acquisition and transport of primates for use in research and testing. The evidence obtained illustrates the suffering that can occur during trapping and breeding of macaques overseas, in this case at CRP. In view of this suffering, the RSPCA calls on the Home Office to adopt a policy banning the use of imported primates in research unless, exceptionally, it is satisfied, after full consultation with all interested parties (including the Society), that in each case:
 - an overriding benefit to the public from the use of the particular primates in the research has been demonstrated
 - there is insufficient domestic capacity for primates of the relevant type
 - the primates have been bred in a captive-breeding centre abroad with welfare standards equivalent to those in the UK
 - every step will be taken to minimize distress during transport
 - the cost-benefit assessment in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which regulates research on animals in the UK, is met. Full account must be taken in the cost-benefit assessment of the suffering involved not only in the experiment itself, but also in acquisition and transport to the UK.
- The Society calls on the Home Office and DEFRA to implement the recommendations in the *Counting the cost* report in full as a matter of extreme urgency.
- The Society urges the European Commission to recommend that relevant authorities in EU member states implement the recommendations in the *Counting the cost* report that apply to Europe. In addition, urgent action should be taken to end the use of wild-caught primates in the EU.
- The welfare of the primates currently held at CRP should be given much higher priority over commercial profits and funds should be diverted immediately to upgrade and enrich existing housing.
- Proper accreditation of overseas breeding centres is essential to ensure primates are held under acceptable conditions. This will ensure that only those centres that provide adequate conditions for their primates are recognized and that sanctions can be applied to those that do not. It is vital that an international system of regulation and control of primate breeding centres be formed, the minimum standards for which should be the IPS guidelines.

Further details of the RSPCA's recommendations can be found in the *Counting the cost* report.

Campaign action

If you are concerned about this issue, please write to the RSPCA's research animals department, highlighting your concerns and support for a clampdown on the trade in primates for research (Research Animals Department, RSPCA, Wilberforce Way, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 9RS).

All letters will be forwarded to the Home Office, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the European Commission.

You can also visit the RSPCA website at www.rspca.org.uk to for further information or to sign the on-line campaign petition.





Wilberforce Way
Southwater, Horsham
West Sussex RH13 9RS
Tel: 0870 010 1181

www.rspca.org.uk

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