

Suggestions for assisting a scientist who is the focus of an animal rights campaign

First, Determine What Will Likely Take Place in the Weeks/Months Ahead

Activist groups tend to use the same strategies repeatedly to place pressure on their targets. Americans for Medical Progress can provide detailed information about the unique methods employed by individual groups. We've also observed and assisted in the response to several past campaigns. **Attached** is a list of common activist strategies to prepare for.

Form a Crisis Planning and Response Team

When an individual scientist is targeted, they often feel isolated and wonder why their institution is not doing more. This is why it's important to form a planning and response team when a longterm campaign is likely. Create a team that includes the scientist, communications staff, animal care leadership, legal, public safety, research administration and other key parties to manage the crisis. Having a planning and response team in place allows organizations to quickly and effectively share information and prepare for upcoming challenges while at the same time, keeping the impacted scientist informed about what is being done proactively and reactively to defend their work.

Ensure Public Records Are Monitored

If the impacted scientist is at a public institution, make sure public records staff alert leadership and the scientist if and when a records request pertaining to the individual is made. When this happens, make sure communications staff are informed and are making plans to respond to a possible media campaign once the records are furnished.

Expand Web Resources and Make Sure That the Information Can Be Understood and Appreciated by Public Audiences

Many lab websites are highly technical because they are primarily written for other scientists. Consider adding information to explain the research to the public. Highlight why and how animals are studied. Explain how humans will benefit. And don't forget to highlight any animal benefits as well. Consider posting:

- Lay summaries of the research.
- Lists of past advancements.
- Information about the care of animals.
- Pictures or videos of animals and the conditions in which they are housed.
- Information about the lab's dedication to good animal care.

Consider Op Eds

Sometimes it's helpful for the scientist to take their case to the public and explain their research in an op-ed. [Here's an example op ed from a scientist at the University of Delaware](#). Also, [here's a nice article](#) on Dr. Roth's work in her campus newspaper.

Another scientist who has been targeted in the recent past is Christine Lattin at Louisiana State University. [She wrote this piece to explain](#) and defend her work. Also, here's [a nice story highlighting](#) Dr. Lattin's work in the New Orleans newspaper. In addition, here's a [previous story](#) on her work when she was at Yale.

Op eds and in-depth stories focused on the research serve several important purposes:

- They can debunk the false claims made by animal rights groups and highlight inaccuracies.
- They can be used repeatedly to defend the research with the public, students, donors, etc.
- They can set the tone for future coverage or help ensure false claims made by opponents are not repeated
- They tend to show up near the top of Google search results, so those searching for additional information get the full story, not just animal rights claims.

Create Fact Sheets

Consider creating a fact sheet about the research or facility in question. The fact sheet should serve as the basis for all messaging. The information contained within can be used to:

- Provide messaging for communications with lawmakers or other key parties.
- The fact sheet could be used as a public handout if questions come up in a public setting.
- Provide messaging for response when an institution receives emails or letters from concerned citizens.
- The fact sheet could be placed online and serve as the centerpiece for a website about the research or facility being criticized.

Consider Contacting a Trusted Reporter

While managing a crisis, many institutions prefer to keep things quiet. However, it is important to remember the impact of telling your own story versus letting opponents do this for you. If there is a trusted local reporter that the institution can approach, consider inviting them to do a story highlighting the research in question and illustrating the institution's robust animal care practices. While this proposal may seem frightening to many organizations, remember that it may only be a matter of time before activists convince a reporter to cover their viewpoint. Therefore, one proven strategy is to tell the story about your research before your opponents do.

(Consider Contacting a Trusted Reporter Continued)

Here's an example of one such effort. Last summer, in the midst of an extended PETA campaign, Texas A&M University decided to do a story with the Dallas Morning News about their Duchenne muscular dystrophy research in dogs. [Here's a link to the resulting story](#). The article also led to an editorial written by the paper itself in support of the research. [Here's a link](#) .

Work With Advocacy Groups

At times, it's helpful to have third party validation. Consider asking a disease advocacy group to write a letter to the editor on your behalf. Americans for Medical Progress has also written op-eds and letters to defend specific research projects or scientists. Another option is to partner with Speaking of Research, an advocacy group mainly made up of scientists. [Here's a link to their website](#).

Consider the Impacts on Faculty/Employee/Student Morale

Recognize that animal rights campaigns often create internal rifts. Faculty members, animal care staff and students are quick to take note if an organization fails to respond or acknowledge activist criticisms. Sometimes, faculty members believe their institution is too embarrassed to defend them and the institution is trying to distance itself from the targeted researcher and their work. These types of tensions illustrate the importance of internal and external communications aimed at defending researchers and protecting their good names.