



ADVICE

Materials and Plans Every Institution Should Have on Hand in Case of an Emergency

One strategy that animal rights groups frequently employ against their targets is using the element of surprise. Research opponents recognize that when science organizations are caught flat-footed, they are often less effective in defending themselves. Because animal care allegations can arise at any time, Americans for Medical Progress advises research organizations to have a few key documents finalized and on-hand and certain plans in place. Here are some tips on how to be better prepared when the unexpected happens.

Create a Fact Sheet About the Use of Animals in Research at Your University or Company

No matter what your organization is accused of, it's always helpful to have thoroughly vetted and approved information on hand about the use of animals in research. Explain the types of studies that are taking place, why animals are used and why certain species are required. It's important to include a list of recent advancements or discoveries that took place at your institution as a result of animal-based investigations. Fact sheets should also include information about animal care and the many layers of oversight in place to ensure that research animals are treated with kindness and respect.

General fact sheets can be used in a variety of venues including interviews, emails to reporters or concerned citizens, webpages, etc. In addition, it's also important for organizations to respond as best as they can to any specific allegations that are made.

Proactively Answer the Tough Questions

In addition to creating a general fact sheet, it's helpful to develop a list of frequently asked questions and answers that address both general and specific issues about your institution's animal studies. When creating this document, AMP advises organizations to include a wide variety of questions - including challenging ones - that might be asked by the general public, lawmakers and other key constituencies.

Consider Making Photos and Videos Available

Animal activists frequently paint horrific pictures of the studies they oppose. This is why it's helpful for research organizations to consider providing images - both photos and videos - that illustrate how animals are housed and cared for. Obtaining these images and getting them approved takes time, which is why research institutions should go through this process long before a crisis erupts.

Proactively Identify Key Spokespeople and Prepare Them

Having good messaging on hand is one thing. But an organization also needs to have a spokesperson (or better yet, several spokespersons) prepared when these points need to be made in person or on camera. Ensure that faculty members or animal care staff are ready and able to speak when needed. It's also a good idea to have a lead communications person assigned to this issue who has clearance to share approved messages with the press.