



Leo A Very Special Cat

ARE YOU AWARE THAT MORE THAN 7 MILLION ANIMALS ARE USED IN AUSTRALIA FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING EVERY YEAR? UNFORTUNATELY THIS FIGURE CONTINUES TO GROW. THE ANIMALS USED INCLUDE PRIMATES, DOGS, CATS, SHEEP, PIGS AND BIRDS. WHILE THE FIGURES MIGHT APPEAR OVERWHELMING, EACH ONE OF THESE 'STATISTICS' IS A SENTIENT INDIVIDUAL WITH AN INTEREST IN LIVING THEIR OWN LIFE. THIS IS AN ACCOUNT OF ONE SUCH INDIVIDUAL.

Background:

Leo first came to our attention in August 2010 when he was released from a testing facility. He was extremely lucky as most animals are killed after experiments are complete. Leo had been part of a study aimed at improving surgical techniques for vision correction in humans. His nictitating membranes (third eyelids) had been surgically removed, but unlike several other cats, he was not implanted with contact lenses as he was part of a control group. Prior to this, he had been used in vaccination studies at another facility.

Journey:

Humane Research Australia first met young Leo on 12th September 2010. We waited on his arrival on a cold windy night, until finally a small crate was handed over to us. Peering out was a sweet young cat who immediately stole our hearts. We couldn't imagine what this innocent animal had gone through. We could only promise that from that day forward he would be safe – never again to be used in experimentation.

While clearly there is an ethical argument against using sentient animals as mere 'research tools', there are also scientific reasons that suggest they are not the best mode of research. Animals differ anatomically, genetically and metabolically from humans, which means that any data derived from animal experiments cannot be extrapolated to humans with sufficient accuracy. Considering there are now new methodologies that provide more predictive outcomes for human health, Humane Research Australia considers animal-based research to be cruel, outdated and should be archived to the history books.



This is what the experts say about Leo:

The use of cats or other animals to test biomaterials (in this case, contact lens) is no more scientific or predictive of what will happen in humans, than tossing a coin. The cat model is incapable of telling the researchers whether the lens actually improves vision and cannot predict human-only complications, especially problems that will develop in the long-term. The experimental use of coronary stents in animals is a good example to illustrate this point. Using healthy sheep did not reveal the serious complications that were subsequently seen in humans.

Human tissue culture and human immune simulators could be used as a first step to test the biocompatibility of the lens. In addition, there are already well established protocols for implanting various types of lens in humans. If, for any reason, the lens is unsuitable, it can be removed and replaced with a more appropriate lens. Any surgical procedure of this nature will always carry some risk, but it is disingenuous for researchers or medical companies to pretend that the animal model will reliably predict human outcome.

Dr Andre Menache, MRCVS, South African veterinary graduate

The aim of the study appears to be to determine if an artificial contact lens will be tolerated within the human cornea, something difficult to imagine being done in vitro. It would be unethical to do the study in human beings,

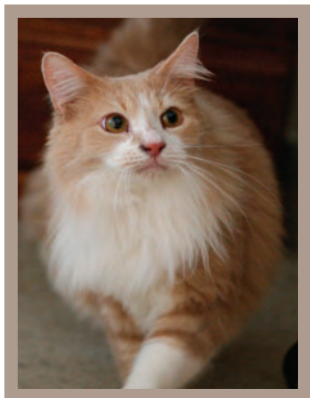
even those who specifically might be benefited by the surgery, because of the invasiveness, risk of complications and the availability of alternatives that are safe. Of course, for precisely the same ethical concerns, the study is unquestionably unethical in cats, particularly because the cats forced into the study would never benefit from it (nor would cats at large; there is no veterinary application for this). Moreover, because the cat cornea responds to insults (like surgery) substantially differently from human beings, the results in cats could not logically nor safely be extrapolated to human beings.

Professor Nedim C. Buyukmihci, V.M.D. Veterinary Ophthalmologist, University of California, School of Veterinary Medicine.

Leo today:

Despite his earlier ordeals, Leo's initial shyness and caution of humans has since subsided and he has become a very affectionate and attention-seeking cat. Like many other companion cats, he now purrs during his regular brushing, eagerly laps from his water fountain and enjoys the company of his new human companions.

Leo has every reason to be distrustful of humans. Like so many others caught up in the multi-billion dollar industry of vivisection, his only value was deemed to be what data could be derived from him. Today he lives in a safe and happy environment with a carer who values Leo as an individual rather than a statistic or a 'tool for research'.



Leo is a very precious cat. He might only represent a tiny percentage of those animals used every year, but that just shows the enormity of the situation. Each one of those 7 million + animals is just as precious and just as deserving as Leo. Sadly, they don't all have a happy ending.

YOU CAN HELP US TO STOP ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS

One of our biggest challenges is that many people are not aware that animals are still used in experiments and so we strive to raise that awareness, and to offer alternative solutions that will not only avoid the suffering of millions of animals, but will actually be more beneficial for medical progress and human health. ■

Take Action!

What you can do...



- **Before making any donation to a health charity, ask whether your contribution will be funding animal experiments. You can check our list of humane charities at: www.humanecharities.org.au**
- **Refuse to purchase any cosmetics or household products that are not 'cruelty free'. Visit www.choosecrueltyfree.org for a list of preferred products.**
- **Display a sticker on your car (available free from HRA). It's a simple action but will be seen by many others.**
- **If you are not already a member, please consider joining Humane Research Australia. For a small annual fee of \$25 you can add your voice to ours in lobbying for effective change.**
- **Become a monthly donor. For a nominal amount deducted from your credit card on the first day of each month, you can help us continue our work.**

Leo is now safe and well, but millions of other animals are depending on your support. If we don't help them, who will? On their behalf, we thank you for your generosity.

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Name: _____
Postal Address: _____
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Email: _____

PAYMENT DETAILS

I am paying by:

☐ Cheque/Money Order ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa

Card Number: _____
Name on Card: _____
Signature: _____ Expiry: ____/____

I'D LIKE TO MAKE A REGULAR MONTHLY DONATION OF:

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per month, until further notice. I understand that this payment can be stopped by me at any time.

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PLEASE SIGN ME UP TO BECOME A MEMBER

☐ \$25

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