

**Monkey business: animal testing sparks international debate. (News Debate).**

IN A BUILDING IN England, more than 400 monkeys live in cages. The tiny creatures have big black eyes and bursts of delicate fur framing their faces. Babies snuggle with their mothers. Some monkeys play together. Others are curled up in the corners of their cages.

The monkeys aren't in a zoo. They're in a research center, where they are used in experiments. By studying the monkeys, scientists can search for cures to the world's most serious diseases.

The research is very controversial. Though scientists say the work is necessary, opponents say it is immoral to hurt monkeys in the name of science.

Plans to build a new neuroscience center at Cambridge University in England have raised the debate to the international stage. The center would allow for even more monkey experiments. All over the world, people are asking whether risking monkeys' lives is worth trying to save humans.

### Helping Sick People

Millions of people suffer from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases--which could someday be cured as a result of animal testing, scientists say. The key to finding those treatments lies in the brain. But experimenting on the human brain is difficult because scans of live brains are imprecise. Scientists say monkeys are ideal for the research because their brains are similar to human brains and are affected by many of the same diseases.

Researchers say monkeys are used as a last resort. "Most medical research does not use animals. Wherever possible, alternatives such as cell cultures, tissues, computers, bacteria, and plants are used instead," said Lord Philip Hunt, the United Kingdom's health minister.

Scientists say research monkeys are harmed as little as possible. There is a lot of incentive to treat the animals well, researchers argue. They say sick or frightened monkeys would affect an experiment's results.

### Keeping Monkeys Alive

Animal rights activists say experimenting on monkeys is cruel. They say researchers mistreat monkeys before subjecting them to painful experiments that are often fatal. Members of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection

(BUAV) say they have footage of researchers at a facility in England sawing open monkeys' skulls and injecting toxins or sucking out parts of the monkeys' brains.

Scientists should spend more time developing tests that don't involve animals, activists say. Virtual research and experiments on human cells or tissue samples are more humane and less expensive, they argue.

Animal testing opponents also point out that differences between monkey and human brains could interfere with testing. "Chimp brains and human brains are similar in structure, but that doesn't mean they perform the same functions," American doctor Ray Greek said.

What do you think? Should scientists be allowed to experiment on monkeys?

### Get Talking

Ask students what they know about animal testing. What is it used for? What kinds of animals are used? What do they think of using animals for research?

### Background

\* Animal testing in the United States is governed by the Animal Welfare Act, which mandates standards for the care and treatment of laboratory animals. The act covers housing, feeding, cleanliness, ventilation, and veterinary care. It also requires the use of anesthesia or painkilling drugs for potentially painful experiments. All facilities that experiment on lab animals must register with and be inspected by the federal government. The act does not cover rats and mice bred specifically for research.

\* An estimated 17 to 23 million animals are used in the United States for research each year, according to the Office of Technology Assessment. About 95 percent of those animals are rats and mice bred specifically for research. In 2000, 69,516 dogs and 25,560 cats were used for research, a United States Department of Agriculture report shows.

### Doing More

Have students choose an animal used in experiments. Have them research that animal to see what kinds of experiments it is used for and what discoveries scientists have made as a result of the research. The Web sites listed below may be helpful.