



September 13, 2017

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Collins:

Animal rights advocacy groups have long used emotionally evocative campaigns to oppose the use of animals in biomedical research and, more recently, have suggested that such research is not fiscally prudent. With a membership of more than 89,000 veterinarians working for the good health and well-being of animals on a daily basis, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) is the leading advocate for animals' welfare in the United States. The AVMA wholeheartedly urges researchers to conduct biomedical research that takes advantage of model systems rather than animals when such alternatives exist. However, the AVMA recognizes and strongly supports the value of using animals in biomedical research for improving knowledge of how and why diseases and conditions occur and progress, as well as to facilitate the development of effective new therapies for diseases and conditions affecting both animals and people.

Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, was quoted recently in the *Washington Examiner* as saying "...there are things we can learn from animal studies that will help people with terrible diseases that we otherwise can't quite learn." Less publicized, but no less important to any person who has ever owned a beloved pet, is that many of the same studies that advance and benefit those 'people with terrible diseases' can help animals suffering the same exact diseases. Osteosarcoma is a bone cancer that is the same disease in dogs as it is in children, with the same devastating prognosis and outcomes in each. Biomedical research conducted in animals can help identify new treatments for osteosarcoma, and that disease is just one of hundreds of examples where both humans and animals can benefit from the results of well-conducted research using animal models.

The AVMA has and will continue to work closely with USDA APHIS Animal Care and the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) to ensure that animal welfare law, regulations, and enforcement support oversight of biomedical research that results in experiments that are designed to use the smallest number of animals necessary to achieve meaningful results, and in such a way as to minimize discomfort to those animals involved. Notably, immediate responsibility for ensuring compliance with federal law, regulations, and policy designed to protect the welfare of animals used in research is borne by approximately 1000 veterinarians at research institutions throughout the country. Most of these individuals have completed several years of additional training beyond their veterinary degrees to become board-certified by the American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine and/or the American College of Animal Welfare, both recognized as veterinary specialty organizations by the AVMA.

Recent advances in mapping and manipulating the genomes of animals have fueled powerful new ways to understand the basis for diseases and conditions and provide heretofore unimaginable strategies to overcome them. The AVMA believes strongly that we need to continue to work toward a future when

computer simulations or tissue grown in labs can be used to produce significant and meaningful advances in health care. But we also believe that now is not the time to abandon the remarkable progress that is being achieved from the conduct of biomedical research in animal models.

The AVMA stands ready to be a resource for any questions that you might have concerning the use of animals in biomedical research. Accordingly, we offer the assistance of Dr. Cia Johnson (Director, Animal Welfare Division) at (847) 285-6696 or cjohnson@avma.org and Dr. Ed Murphey (Assistant Director, Division of Education and Research) at (832) 864-3035 or emurphey@avma.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet D. Donlin DVM". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "D".

Janet D. Donlin DVM, CAE
Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer

EDM/CJ/GCG/ML