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N E W S R E L E A S E

For Immediate Release:
Wednesday, July 13, 2005

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USDA Fails to Address Pet Cloning Industry Research Petitioner AAVS expresses concern for animal welfare

Jenkintown, PA – The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) applauds the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) decision to require a pet cloning company that clones pet cats and exhibits them at trade shows to apply for an animal exhibitor license. However, AAVS is disappointed that the federal agency did not concur with the primary reason AAVS filed its petition: to encourage USDA to regulate pet cloning companies as research facilities under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

“We have significant concerns about the animals being used by pet cloning companies, at least one of which purchases cats from Class A animal dealers for use as ‘surrogate’ mothers who are subjected to multiple surgeries,” said Crystal Miller-Spiegel, AAVS Senior Policy Analyst.

According to AAVS, there has been a great deal of media hype surrounding pet cloning but in reality, there have been very few cloned cats seen by the public.

“The public deserves to know what’s happening to the animals who are used and born. These companies claim they perform ‘cutting-edge’ research, but are operating outside the legal framework for scientific research, which makes their claims suspect,” said Miller-Spiegel.

Joseph Mendelson, Esq., Kimbrell and Mendelson, LLP, Washington, DC, whose firm filed the petition on behalf of AAVS, added, "While we are pleased that USDA has acknowledged the necessity for regulation of certain activities by the pet cloning industry, we believe that the agency's decision opens the doors for these for-profit firms to continue to hide how these animals are treated in pet cloning research."

AAVS is seeking further clarification from USDA about the future implications of this decision.

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About AAVS

AAVS is a non-profit animal advocacy and educational organization that has been monitoring the use of animals in laboratories since 1883. AAVS is among the oldest animal protection organizations in the United States. AAVS pursues its objectives through legal and effective advocacy, education, and the support of the development of non-animal alternative methods.

BACKGROUND

November 18, 2004 – AAVS launches a website, www.NoPetCloning.org, to educate the public.

February 15, 2005 – AAVS files a legal petition with the U.S. Department of Agriculture asking the agency to regulate companies which are cloning and genetically modifying pet animals. For a copy of the petition, please e-mail ssinger@singercomm.com.

February 16, 2005 – AAVS releases report, *Pet Cloning: Separating Facts from Fluff*, to educate the public and policymakers about the dangers and concerns surrounding pet cloning which include animal welfare, questionable science, lack of oversight, consumer deception, and ethics. The report includes references to scientific literature and results of an independent public survey commissioned by AAVS that found that 80 percent of people in the US are opposed to pet cloning.

February 22, 2005 – AB 1428 was introduced in the California State Assembly to ban the retail sale and transfer of cloned and genetically modified pets in California. The bill was sponsored by Californians Against Pet Cloning, of which AAVS is a founding member. Status: Pending for 2006 Session.

July 12, 2005: USDA rules on petition filed by AAVS requesting the federal agency regulate the pet cloning industry. USDA's response is that they will regulate a small portion of the industry but unfortunately, not the portion that deals with the treatment of animals in laboratory research.

Further Definitions

The AWA (originally the Laboratory Animal Welfare Act) was created in 1966, to regulate the use of certain animals in laboratories in the United States. It enforced by USDA and requires that laboratories using AWA-regulated animals: register with USDA; abide by minimal standards of animal care and use; establish Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees to review and respond to animal experiment protocols; properly search for alternative methods of research; and report the numbers of animals used and the level of pain or distress they experience, among other requirements. According to USDA, in 2002 (the most recent year for which animal statistics are available), at least 68,253 dogs and 24,222 cats were used in laboratory experiments in the U.S.

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