

Association for the Abolition of Animal Experiments

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The myth of animal experimentation:

Science journalism

«As a science journalist, I have never written anything critical about animal experiments.»

Time and again, reports appear in the media which portray animal experiments as a useful and indispensable research method. How do such one-sided reports originate?

▶ The easiest form of science journalism consists of leafing through journals specializing in animal experimentation such as *Science*, *Nature* and *Nature Medicine*. One simply chooses publications of interest and summarizes them in order to disseminate through articles in the daily newspapers or reports on the radio and television the claims of success and the promises of cures made by the animal experimenters. So that the public learns nothing about the failures and dangers of animal experimentation, these are almost completely ignored by science journalists.

▶ Science journalists are also fond of participating in animal experimentation congresses and prize ceremonies which take place year-round all over the world. By attending lectures and conducting interviews at such events, science journalists become acquainted with the animal experimenters and subsequently write flattering reports – including quotes and personal information – about their work. Science journalists, however, act not only as cheerleaders, but often also as instructors for animal experimenters, by offering «media training courses for researchers» so that the latter can optimally communicate the alleged usefulness and necessity of their experiments to the general public.

▶ After every «breakthrough» or «discovery» in the laboratory, the animal experimenters and their PR-advisers issue a press release or hold a press conference and get in touch with science journalists. As a result, enthusiastic reports about the results of the animal experiments appear on the radio and television and in the daily newspapers. In certain cases, the media even serve as the mouthpiece of the animal experimentation lobby: In addition to the articles supporting animal experimentation written by science journalists, numerous newspapers publish articles written by animal experimenters, and certain radio and television programs invite animal experimenters to present their work. It is therefore hardly surprising that the general public still believes in the supposed usefulness and necessity of animal experiments.