

Animal research is crucial for pets -- and their owners

By Matthew R. Bailey

A team of researchers is testing a groundbreaking vaccine that could prevent cancer in dogs.

About 800 dog owners have volunteered their healthy canine companions for a clinical trial. The pets will receive either the vaccine or a placebo and will undergo regular checkups to monitor for tumors. Researchers have spent more than a decade developing the drug -- and hope that it could stave off every form of cancer.

Six million canines are diagnosed with cancer annually. If the vaccine works, it could save tens of millions from an untimely end. And since dogs and humans develop similar cancers, researchers are optimistic the vaccine could ultimately be used in people.

Eradicating cancer with a single shot sounds like science fiction. But thanks to research in animal models, it could soon be scientific fact. Impeding this research, as some animal rights activists would have us do, would be a disaster -- for pets and people.

Americans love their pets. More than 60 million U.S. households

have a dog; 47 million have a cat.

Our pets rely on medicines that were developed thanks to humane research in animal models. Several vaccines can prevent cats from developing feline leukemia virus -- which kills 85 percent of cats within three years of diagnosis. New anti-inflammatory drugs can enable dogs with arthritis -- which afflicts one in five dogs -- to move with less pain.

Without clinical trials in pets, none of these advances would have been possible.

Many animal researchers are pet owners who chose their profession specifically to help their furry friends. Consider Dr. Jessica Quimby, a veterinary scientist at Ohio State University who developed an affection for barn cats as a girl growing up in Wisconsin. Now, she's uncovering ways to help felines who have kidney disease, which afflicts about 10 percent of cats over ten years old. Quimby has spent the past decade analyzing how an antidepressant for humans might help cats with failing kidneys boost their appetites and live longer, healthier lives.

There are many

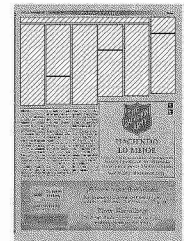
more potential treatments for animals with dangerous diseases on the horizon.

Researchers at CSU are attempting to find the first definitive non-invasive diagnostic test for feline infectious peritonitis, a highly fatal disease that kills kittens without any warning symptoms. Other CSU veterinarians are testing how a compound derived from marijuana can treat epilepsy in dogs without the side effects of debilitating sedatives.

Such studies can also help humans. A report published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, for example, revealed that medicines used to protect pets from fleas and ticks could actually help humans fight Zika and malaria. Meanwhile, research from Texas A&M University on brain tumors in dogs could soon yield insight into human brain tumors.

Despite its impressive history of producing cures for all sorts of diseases that afflict both pets and humans, critics claim animal research is unnecessary.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Animal research has already saved, and will continue to save, mil-



lions of pets' lives. Without animal research, how many of our cats would be dying prematurely of leukemia? Or how many of our dogs would be unable to run and play because of debilitating arthritic pain?

Cats and dogs are treasured family members for many Americans. To ensure that their furry friends can live long, happy lives, pet lovers must support animal testing.

Matthew R. Bailey is president of the Foundation for Biomedical Research.