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## Undercover investigation reveals what goes on inside Montreal animal research lab

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A national council responsible for monitoring animal welfare in research laboratories is investigating hidden camera footage obtained by W5 that appears to show mistreatment of dogs, pigs and monkeys used for testing at a Montreal-based facility.

Portions of the footage, which was shot by the Los Angeles-based animal rights group, Last Chance for Animals, that embedded a technician at ITR Laboratories Canada for four months, were shown to the Executive Director of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), Louise Desjardins.

She wouldn't comment directly on what she had seen but told W5 that the association was in discussions with ITR about the footage.

"I do not want to pre-empt or preclude the work of the panel," she told W5 in an interview. "I really think that they need the time to do that work and gather all the facts."

The video shows dogs aggressively thrown into cages, pigs restrained as they squeal, and technicians slamming animals onto stainless steel operating tables. It was filmed by a lab technician who was also an undercover agent for the animal rights group.

"Dogs (were) howling, crying all day long," recalled the investigator, who asked not to be identified so she could conduct other undercover operations. "Up and down the halls you'd go, and that's all you would hear is the dogs howling and crying."

Last Chance for Animals' undercover footage provides what is believed to be the first inside look at a Canadian testing facility and focuses attention on an industry, largely unregulated, that make animals sick so humans won't be. The public rarely gets to see what the animals endure. While animal testing is legal, it is nevertheless very upsetting to watch.

Hours of video have also been filed with the Quebec government, along with 17 pages of an official complaint alleging abuse and inhumane practices at the Montreal lab.

ITR Laboratories Canada disputes the claim.

“ITR operates in compliance with industry standards and federal, and provincial guidelines for animal care in a laboratory testing environment,” the company wrote in a statement to W5. “We take our responsibility to treat the animals in our care with the utmost respect very seriously.”

Every year in Canada, an estimated three and a half million animals are used by science, some of them exposed to experimental drugs, household products, and even cosmetics to test their tolerance to them.

The vast majority of the animals are mice, fish and birds, but 12,000 dogs and 5,000 monkeys are also involved in more advanced testing. The animals are bred for the purpose, sold to the labs, and live very short and often painful lives.

“There are certain cases that we documented that certainly rise to the level of abuse,” said Adam Wilson, who leads investigations for Last Chance for Animals.

Specifically, Wilson cites video that appears to show a technician striking a pair of beagles 16 times because they wouldn’t look forward in preparation for exposure to chemicals through a mask.

Industry guidelines are supposed to prevent harsh treatment of animals in science. They clearly state only the minimal force necessary should be employed against lab animals.

W5 also offered to screen the video for ITR Laboratories Canada. The company’s Senior Vice President, Ginette Bain, did not accept W5’s repeated offers to watch it. She said she will rely on the CCAC panel’s findings on whether there are any concerns.

“ITR has zero tolerance for the mistreatment of any animals under our care and maintains procedures to ensure staff may report and discuss concerns openly,” the company wrote in a statement.