



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

March 3, 1989

The Honorable Alfred E. Vellucci
Mayor of the City of Cambridge
Office of the Mayor
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mayor Vellucci:

I write in response to your request that I elaborate on the comments in my recent report to the Council regarding the "ongoing effort at MIT to improve housing, increase diversion, and provide feeding procedures for monkeys which are more like those of the natural habitat".

First of all, I want to stress that the MIT Committee on Animal Care (CAC) has had a long-standing interest in this subject and began a year ago to develop a special program to enhance the psychological well-being of our monkeys. Some of the specific steps we have taken have included the following:

1. Last spring we began a modification of our monkey cages to increase their vertical dimensions;
2. Subsequently, we introduced diversionary puzzle feeders into the macaque colony. Although successful in occupying the attention of our monkeys for short periods of time, these feeders seemed to have only a limited recreational value for our macaques. Furthermore, and regrettably, in the hands of many of our monkeys, these devices proved too fragile -- that is, the monkeys broke them;
3. Based on the suggestions found in a few scientific papers, we have undertaken preliminary observations of the use of television imaging in animal quarters. This preliminary exploration indicates that our monkeys are interested in this sort of imaging diversion;

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4. As a follow-up to this early experience with television, we are now engaged in planning a program of objective observation to determine the value of television and the types of images which might be optimal for monkeys. This program is being planned with the help of personnel at the New England Regional Primate Center in Southborough and at the University of Massachusetts;

5. In recent months, we have increased the number of visits by animal caretakers and, therefore, of their interactions with our monkeys;

6. We have also introduced foraging feeders which require our monkeys to expend some effort to obtain food. We believe there are psychological advantages in using these feeders in contrast to unimpeded feeders which offer no challenge;

7. Late last year we conducted a seminar with representatives of the CAC, the MIT veterinary group, and all principal researchers using monkeys for the purpose of discussing departures in routine husbandry which would enhance life in our monkey quarters. As a result of these discussions, multiple or gang-housing of squirrel monkeys was begun and plans to implement pair-housing of macaques were initiated.

8. In a related development in housing for our monkeys, we are seeking to develop at the present time a plan for preference socializing of macaques using computerized cage access techniques.

We believe these steps, and others that may be taken, cannot fail to enhance the psychological well-being of our animals.

Sincerely,



Walter L. Milne
Assistant to the President



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Assistant to the President

0-30

Comm. from Walter L. Milne, Asst. to the President, MIT Re: elaboration on the comments contained in his recent report to the Council on MIT's ongoing efforts to improve housing, etc. for monkeys at MIT.

March 6, 1989

3-1-89

Placed on file.