



November 19, 2004

Ms. Mary Beth Sweetland  
Senior Vice President  
Director, Research & Investigations Department  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals  
501 Front Street  
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Mary Beth:

This responds to the letter we received from Shalin Gala of PETA on November 1, 2004 concerning a study I am conducting at Purdue University to evaluate the impact that a diet with selected polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) has on the wasting of bone and muscle which occurs during disuse (i.e. such as that which occurs during the casting of a bone or the immobility seen following hip replacement).

A major issue in veterinary care today is the atrophy of muscle and bone which occurs when a dog experiences disuse of a limb. This disuse can occur following a surgical procedure such as a hip replacement or occur chronically as the animal ages and becomes less active. The purpose of this current research is to see if a diet rich in PUFAs can be effective in protecting dogs from the consequences of limb disuse.

We were already aware of the literature Shalin cited on this topic. It is that work which makes us believe that a diet rich in PUFAs could enhance the health of dogs who experience disuse. However, I must disagree with his conclusion that the specific questions we are asking have already been answered. For example, the mechanism by which PUFAs impact this wasting of bone and muscle is not known. In addition, there are many different PUFAs and we do not know the levels or the specific combination of PUFAs that would provide the most beneficial effect. This is particularly important since it has been shown that an inappropriate ratio or level of PUFAs can lead to deleterious effects.

It is our intent to use the mouse study at Purdue to help us understand the mechanism by which PUFAs protect from disuse atrophy, define the specific PUFAs that are most beneficial, and determine the optimal levels that should be in the diet. By obtaining these initial data in mice, we are able to limit the evaluations we need to ultimately conduct in dogs. As such evaluations would need to be conducted on dogs that have undergone a surgical procedure such as a hip replacement and are recruited from veterinary clinics, we feel it is best to limit such testing to candidate diets for which we feel we have the greatest chance for success. This will also better ensure that the dogs in the final clinical gain benefit from the test diet.

Currently there are no non-animal alternatives available to fully address these questions about PUFA mechanisms and the most beneficial types and levels of PUFAs. Our goal is not to understand the direct effects of PUFAs on individual muscle or bone cells, but to understand the beneficial effects of a diet rich in PUFAs on improving the atrophy which results from limb disuse. An artificial system cannot yet mimic the complexities associated with the biological effects of diet nor the “communication” which happens between bone and muscle in the wasting process.

At my request, Dr. Len Sauers personally visited Purdue University and observed the mice in this research. He confirmed what we already believed - - that this procedure was not inhumane. As with all research at Iams, this study will continue to be monitored closely through its completion.

Disuse atrophy is a major issue in veterinary care today. We believe this work continues Iams' commitment to developing products that significantly advance the health and welfare of dogs.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara J. Slatt

cc: Mr. Shalin Gala - PETA