

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Silver Spring Monkeys Case: A Pivotal Moment in Animal Rights History

In May 1981, almost one year after forming People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco decided to investigate the treatment of animals in laboratories. Little did they know this investigation would be a turning point for animal rights and would result in a historic case spanning over a decade. They located the closest facility—the Institute for Behavioral Research (IBR) in Silver Spring, Maryland—and Alex applied to work there as a volunteer. His goal was to see what animal laboratories were really like, and PETA quickly began an **undercover investigation** after he saw the terrible living conditions, neglect, lack of veterinary care, and nightmarish experiments the animals were forced to endure.



IBR had 17 monkeys it was using in experiments. Sixteen of them were male crab-eating macaques of various ages. They had all been abducted from their natural habitat in the Philippines and transferred to IBR about five years earlier. The remaining monkey was a female rhesus macaque. IBR had purchased her from another laboratory about eight years earlier, when she was taken from her mother at just 1 day old. In nature, monkeys like these are social individuals who enjoy being in trees and eating a variety of foods throughout the day, including fruit, crabs, insects, flowers and other plants, fungi, and even clay. IBR kept the monkeys separated in small, filthy, wire cages and fed them only once a day at most.

Sometimes they were deprived of food for up to three days if workers failed to feed them or to force them to cooperate in experiments. When they were fed, food pellets were thrown into their cages and fell through the wire floors into the excrement trays below. Alex observed the monkeys reaching through the wire floors to pick contaminated food pellets out of their own waste. Many of them had lost the fur on their tails, legs, and arms due to malnutrition from being fed expired commercial monkey “chow.”

These living conditions were horrible, and being used for experiments made the monkeys’ lives even worse. The chief experimenter, Edward Taub, had been performing **vivisection** for 20 years when Alex began investigating. Even though Taub didn’t have any veterinary or medical training, he performed surgeries on the monkeys to cause deafferentation. This means he cut the nerves in their backs to render their limbs partially or wholly useless. Then he and other workers used “negative stimuli” (pain) to try to force the monkeys to regain use of their crippled limbs. The negative stimuli included **psychological deprivation**; food deprivation (starvation); locking them inside a small, dark, converted refrigerator and shocking them with electricity; and pinching their skin with pliers. In addition to enduring the harm inflicted by the experimenters, the monkeys were harming themselves, especially the fingers and limbs they couldn’t feel anymore because of the deafferentation surgery. They were pulling out their own fur, gouging their own flesh, and tearing off their own fingers (if they hadn’t already been torn off by the jagged wires in the cages). These behaviors are all signs of **neurosis**, which was caused by the severe distress and trauma of the experiments and the wretched living conditions. They received virtually no veterinary care, and some of their wounds became infected because any bandages applied to them were rarely or never cleaned or changed. Some of the monkeys died of gangrene poisoning.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), the leading financer of animal experimentation in the world, had already given IBR \$1.2 million in taxpayer funding to conduct experiments on the monkeys. But even with this funding, IBR remained deplorably filthy, with mold-covered feces and urine caking the cages and floors.

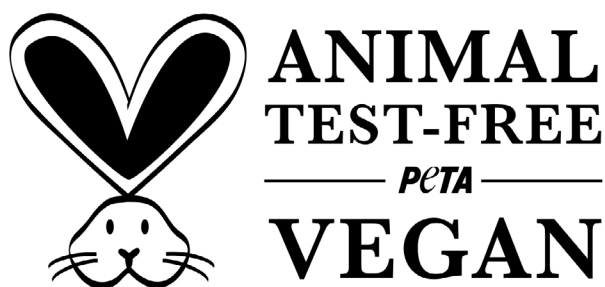
And even though there were multiple violations of the federal **Animal Welfare Act**, government inspectors ignored them. Within just four months, PETA had enough evidence to take to the police, who raided IBR with a search-and-seizure warrant and removed all 17 monkeys. IBR was later shut down, and Taub was convicted of cruelty to animals for mistreating the monkeys. This marked the first time in history that an animal experimenter was charged with and convicted of this offense. Sadly, some of the monkeys were sent to animal experimenters at other laboratories, but PETA continued to fight for them for over a decade. One aspect of the case even made it to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in PETA's favor, marking another historical first. PETA celebrated another important win when some of the monkeys were transferred to the San Diego Zoo, where they had access to indoor and outdoor spaces and the company of other monkeys out of public sight. Eventually, the few remaining Silver Spring monkeys were experimented on and killed.

Before PETA was founded, few people were paying attention to animal welfare in laboratories and testing facilities. The case of the Silver Spring monkeys forced the world to talk about the treatment of animals used in research, and it set a **precedent** for change. Thanks to this



case, the public got a glimpse into the dark, hidden world of animal experimentation. The result was a general outcry against the mistreatment of animals and a rise in support for PETA and its work. This empowered the organization to become more influential, and with the help of supporters, it persuaded the first corporations to

stop testing on animals in the late 1980s. Since then, more than 6,500 other [household, cosmetics, and personal-care](#) companies and brands have followed in their footsteps, along with many food companies such as B&G Foods Inc., which owns brands including Cream of Wheat and Green Giant.



Even though many companies have phased out tests on animals in favor of humane, animal-free methods, millions of animals are still being experimented on today. Everyone can take simple steps to help these victims in a variety of ways, including by deciding never to donate money to health charities that test on animals, rejecting dissection in the classroom and choosing not to enroll in courses that require using animals, informing others about the animal testing industry, pledging never to buy products that have been tested on animals, and

encouraging friends and family to do the same. Look for PETA's "Animal Test-Free" or "Animal Test-Free and Vegan" logos on products before buying them. Download PETA's free app Bunny Free to search for companies that don't test on animals. Or visit PETA's Beauty Without Bunnies website at CrueltyFree.PETA.org to learn more. When people refuse to buy products that were tested on animals, it sends a message to companies that consumers don't support animal testing and will buy products that have been tested with animal-free methods instead.

Vocabulary: 'The Silver Spring Monkeys Case: A Pivotal Moment in Animal Rights History'

Using contextual evidence from the passage, define the **bolded** terms in your own words.

undercover investigation

vivisection

psychological deprivation

neurosis

Animal Welfare Act

precedent

Answer Sheet Key Vocabulary: ‘The Silver Spring Monkeys Case: A Pivotal Moment in Animal Rights History’

undercover investigation	the act of masking one’s true identity for the purpose of blending into an environment in order to gather information
vivisection	the cutting open of or operation on a living animal, usually for physiological or pathological experimentation <i>broadly</i> : animal experimentation, especially if it causes distress or results in the animal’s injury or death
psychological deprivation	a lack of adequate opportunity for social and intellectual stimulation, usually causing significant emotional disturbance
neurosis	a mental and emotional disorder that causes distress and negatively affects the ability to function in any area of life
Animal Welfare Act	a federal law meant to protect animals (excluding birds, rats, and mice) from abuse by defining minimum standards of care
precedent	something that is meant to be an example or rule for how to do similar things in the future

Comprehension Questions: ‘The Silver Spring Monkeys Case: A Pivotal Moment in Animal Rights History’

1. How did this case influence the public’s opinion of animal testing, and what impact did that have on the launch of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) as a nonprofit organization?

2. Why do you think few people were paying attention to animal welfare in laboratories and testing facilities before PETA was founded, and why did more people start paying attention after this case?

3. In what ways were Pacheco and PETA successful in the Silver Spring monkeys case?

4. Compare and contrast the lives of the 17 monkeys in captivity at IBR with the lives of monkeys in nature. How does this comparison make you feel and why?

5. What can you do to help monkeys like the Silver Spring monkeys and other animals used in the vivisection industry? List a resource you could use and describe how it would help.

6. People sometimes say, "I'm just one person. How are my actions going to make a difference?" Using this case as an example, explain why it's important for individuals to take action and ask others for help.

Answer Sheet: ‘The Silver Spring Monkeys Case: A Pivotal Moment in Animal Rights History’

1. How did this case influence the public’s opinion of animal testing, and what impact did that have on the launch of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals as a nonprofit organization?

Answer: PETA’s work on this case exposed the horrific living conditions and cruel treatment of animals used in experimentation to the public, which caused many people to form unfavorable opinions of animal testing and begin supporting PETA’s work. The rise in support following this case empowered PETA to have greater influence in persuading large companies to drop animal testing and to reach a wider audience. (Literal)

2. Why do you think few people were paying attention to animal welfare in laboratories and testing facilities before PETA was founded, and why did more people start paying attention after this case?

Possible answer: People probably assumed that animals were being treated well in laboratories and testing facilities because the federal Animal Welfare Act was in place and it sounded like it gave protection to animals in these settings. People probably started paying attention after this case because it revealed that animals were being abused in these places and that no one was holding laboratories accountable or enforcing the federal Animal Welfare Act. (Inferential)

3. In what ways were Pacheco and PETA successful in the Silver Spring monkeys case?

Answer: By going undercover, Pacheco was able to obtain the information that PETA needed to expose cruelty to animals at IBR, have the company shut down, and have Edward Taub charged with cruelty to animals, which led to his conviction and marked the first time in history that an animal experimenter was charged with and convicted of this offense. Pacheco and PETA also successfully rescued some of the monkeys, who were sent to the San Diego Zoo, where they were no longer experimented on. (Literal)

4. Compare and contrast the lives of the 17 monkeys in captivity at IBR with the lives of monkeys in nature. How does this comparison make you feel and why?

Possible answer: At IBR, the monkeys were forced to live alone in small, filthy cages. They were fed only pellets, which sometimes fell into their waste, so they had to pick them out of it. Sometimes they weren't fed at all. They were forced to endure cruel, painful surgeries with no pain relief. In nature, the monkeys would've enjoyed socializing with each other, being in trees, and eating many different types of food. It makes me feel sad, because no animal should be torn away from their home and subjected to cruel treatment. (Evaluative)

5. What can you do to help monkeys like the Silver Spring monkeys and other animals used in the vivisection industry? List a resource you could use and describe how it would help.

Answer: I can pledge to research products before buying them, buy only products that weren't tested on animals, and encourage friends and family to do the same. PETA's free app Bunny Free is a resource I could use to find cruelty-free products in order to make sure my money isn't funding animal experiments. (Literal)

6. People sometimes say, "I'm just one person. How are my actions going to make a difference?" Using this case as an example, explain why it's important for individuals to take action and ask others for help.

Possible answer: As we can see from this case, changes can come about when brave individuals take action. IBR was shut down, Taub was convicted of cruelty to animals, monkeys were rescued, and thousands of companies ended their animal-testing policies after just two people decided to take action for a cause they believed in. Once they had done all they could do on their own, they asked others for help. When people work together, they have more power and influence to bring about greater change. (Inferential)