Law would strengthen regulations

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Opponents of the ordinance found fault with this definition of an animal. Such a definition would encompass too wide a range of creatures. One person attending the hearing suggested that even microscopic organisms would be included in the definition.

Dr. Carolyn Comptone, a physician and medical researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital, said "[Using animals] is the sacrifice we must make if we want to save human lives." Sixty percent of the animals undergo painless procedures, 30 percent experience pain mitigated by anesthesia, and less than ten percent experience pain without receiving pain killers or anesthesia, she said.

"It is very important that medical research continue without more bureaucratic controls," said one member of the audience.

Law would change membership of animal research committees

The NIH requires all research institutions to establish an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee; each committee must contain at least one member from outside the institution. The proposed law would arrange for the Animal Commission of the City Cambridge to compile a list of animal rights advocates to serve as non-institution members on each IACUC. The law would stipulate that each institution's IACUC could only choose its outside member from this list of animal rights advocates.

Newcomer said he is opposed to this change in committee membership. Having an IACUC member who has little knowledge of biology or medicine could be disastrous for an institution, he explained.