

# WASTEBOOK

## THE FARCE AWAKENS

# 2 MONKEYS ON A TREADMILL

Texas/Maryland  
National Institutes of Health  
\$1 MILLION

Take the monkey and run.

That's the title of the aptly named study detailing how the Southwest National Primate Research Center trained twelve marmoset monkeys to run on a treadmill with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).<sup>14</sup>

Each of the twelve little monkeys was put into a "transparent rodent exercise ball." The balls of monkeys were then placed onto a standard human NordicTrak treadmill. The treadmill was started at a low speed and gradually increased to 1 mile per hour.<sup>15</sup>



*Twelve little monkeys were trained to run in a rodent ball on a treadmill in a NIH funded study.*

The monkeys did acclimate to running in the exercise ball on the treadmill, but not without some spills and mishaps along the way. One vomited in his exercise ball and three others "defecated in their exercise ball."<sup>16</sup> Another monkey "in the treadmill running group died during week 11 of the study, for reasons not related to the study," according to the researchers.<sup>17</sup>

The scientists say "while it was technically forced exercise, it did not appear to induce stress in the marmosets."<sup>18</sup> They also acknowledge studies have previously been conducted with macaques on treadmills, but claim "to our knowledge, this is the first described method to engage marmosets in aerobic exercise."<sup>19</sup>

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They do point out “the main potential limitation with exercise training and testing is time, as this process is labor intensive. We worked with each marmoset 5 days/week, for one month, habituating and training to the capture and exercise paradigms. Maintaining the exercise then occurred 3 days each week for 3 months.”<sup>20</sup>

What do the findings of this study mean for the future of science and monkeys?



The researchers say more studies of monkeys running on treadmills can be conducted for more meaningful purposes. Specifically, they assert “these techniques should be useful to researchers wishing to address physiological responses of exercise in a marmoset model.”<sup>21</sup>

*A monkey in a hamster ball running on a treadmill.*

And in a case of monkey-see, monkey-do, the National Institute on Aging is already spending more than \$600,000 to conduct its own monkey on a treadmill study.<sup>22</sup> “A treadmill was purchased and a ventilated-lexan box was designed to confine the monkey to the treadmill. Several monkeys are currently walking on the treadmill daily,” according to project information posted by NIH.<sup>23</sup>

The Southwest National Primate Research Center, located in Texas, received \$8 million from NIH in 2015 for the grant that financed the 12 little monkeys running on a treadmill study.<sup>24 25</sup> Over the past decade, the facility has collected nearly \$70 million in grants and contracts from various federal agencies.<sup>26</sup> During this same period, the center has also been slapped with fines totaling more than \$30,000 by the federal government for a number of violations, including performing a necropsy on a baboon that was still alive.<sup>27</sup> USDA identified 14 violations of the Animal Welfare Act at the center over a two year period.<sup>28</sup>

While primate research can further scientific understanding, this is the kind of monkey business that makes taxpayers go bananas.

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