



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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Petition seeks to expand research animal protections in U.S.

In the early 1990s, Canada was the frontrunner in developing official protections for invertebrates used in research, thanks in part to the work of University of Lethbridge professors like Dr. Jennifer Mather.



Back in 1991, Mather, a U of L psychology professor and octopus expert, Professor Emeritus Gail Michener and Dr. Dan Johnson, Department of Geography & Environment, were involved with a committee through the Canadian Council on Animal Care, the national organization responsible for setting and maintaining standards for the ethical use and care of animals in science.

“The committee recommended that cephalopods be protected,” says Mather. “In 1991, cephalopods were protected for research in Canada and Canada was the first country in the world to do this.”

While Europe adopted similar protections in subsequent years, invertebrate animals used in research in the United States still have no protection. Katherine Meyer, a visiting professor of law at Harvard Law School, wants to change that through a recent petition that asks the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to include cephalopods — octopus, squid and cuttlefish — among the animals entitled to humane treatment by those involved in NIH-funded research.

Among the co-petitioners is Mather, who has published extensively on the intelligence of cephalopods. She co-edited the book *Cephalopod Cognition* (2014), has written about cephalopod care issues and is a co-editor of and contributing author to the book *Invertebrate Welfare* (2019).

“Intelligent invertebrates like octopuses are considered tissue in the United States,” says Mather. “Several universities in the U.S. have made cephalopods honorary vertebrates.

“Cephalopods are as smart as vertebrates, easily. We’re pretty sure they have pain and suffering and they know what’s happening when you do things to them.”

This news release can be found online at [cephalopod petition](#).

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