



## Gagged and bound

DAN LYONS knows all about gagging orders. For the past 18 months he has been silenced by an injunction.

It all started two years ago when a stash of company memos and confidential scientific findings landed on his doormat in Sheffield. Lyons is an animal welfare campaigner, and the leaked documents described animal experiments by a British biotech company called Imutran.

The company is now part of a Boston-based outfit financed by the drugs and chemicals giant Novartis. But in the mid-1990s, Imutran was attempting to use genetic engineering to turn pigs into organ donors. It paid contract researchers to transplant its pig organs into more than 400 macaques and baboons.

Technically the documents were stolen, but Lyons argues that much of what they contain is in the public interest and ought to be published. Specifically, he claims that in the papers the company published in scientific journals, it exaggerated the average survival times and health of the monkeys, and that some animals suffered unnecessary pain due to surgical blunders.

No one can verify these allegations because Lyons risks imprisonment if he discloses any part of the documents. But last year, the government's chief inspector of animal experiments, who has seen the documents, issued a report stating that "the decisions taken by the surgical team were taken in good faith", but that "in several instances" the procedures led to "unnecessary animal suffering".

Since then experts at Britain's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals have written a fuller report on the documents. However, the authors are unable to circulate the report even to members of their own organisation without the company's permission—which they have not yet received.