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Patent on mouse challenged by animal-rights groups

BRUSSELS (UPI-Kyodo) Leading animal-rights groups Tuesday announced a challenge to the first European patent ever awarded for a genetically engineered animal species.

"An increasing number of people view animals not as existing simply for our use and profit, but as our fellow-creatures — capable, like us, of feeling pain and suffering," the group's Compassion in World Farming and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection said in announcing a challenge to a patent on

the so-called "Oncomouse."

"Oncomice" are laboratory mice genetically engineered to have increased cancer susceptibility.

Harvard University researchers created the creatures by inserting "oncogenes," or cancer-causing genomes, into the animals normal genetic material — markedly increasing the animals likelihood of developing tumors.

Proponents claim the genetically engineered mice will prove valuable to cancer researchers.