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Animal cruelty case opens against large biological supply firm in U.S.

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) A federal administrative law judge began hearing allegations Monday of animal-welfare violations against one of the world's biggest suppliers of products for biology studies.

At the center of the case against Carolina Biological Supply is a videotape that shows several cats twitching while strapped down. Animal rights activists say it shows live cats being embalmed. The company says the cats were dead and the twitches were involuntary muscle con-

tractions common in freshly killed animals.

If the U.S. Department of Agriculture judge finds Carolina Biological Supply guilty, the Burlington-based company could be fined and its federal animal license could be suspended. The case is expected to last into next week.

Publicity from the case could help turn the public against animal science research, jeopardizing medical advances, said Steve Mosier, director of research services for the University of North

Carolina at Greensboro.

"The danger here is in the public's attitude to science," he said. "One piece of the chain is seen as being corrupt or inhuman, and it carries over."

"If the public doesn't support the integrity of science, the whole system goes down the tubes."

Doctors and researchers say animal research is necessary in the classroom to teach about life and in the laboratory to advance medical frontiers.