SOLUTION TO A WEIGHTY PROBLEM

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A device for weighing animals before and after experimental sessions should be accurate, easy to keep clean, and adapted to different kinds of organisms. In the Harvard Pigeon Laboratory, the arrangement illustrated in Fig. 1 has been found to satisfy these requirements. A sheet of 0.04-in. clear cellulose acetate was cut and made into a tube, open at both ends and wider at one end than the other. The joint was made by applying acetone along the two ends of the sheet and clamping the ends together, with an overlap of 2 to 3 in. The tube was then bolted to the baseplate of the scales. The bolting was done along the joint, so that the acetone seal was reinforced by the bolts. The heads of the bolts, on the inside of the tube, were filed smooth.

This device accommodates both pigeons and rats. The taper allows each pigeon, regardless of its size, to be pushed into the tube to the point at which its wings are held against its body. The pigeons therefore remain quite still while being weighed. They can be removed easily from the large end by pushing them from the small end. Rats have plenty of room in the tube and usually sit quietly.

Because of the lightness of the cellulose acetate, the range of the scale is not limited, as it would be if a lidded box or a beaker were used to hold the animals for weighing.

Fig. 1. Method for weighing pigeons and rats.