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Penn holds 'water buffalo' hearing

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Months after a confrontation outside a University of Pennsylvania dormitory, both sides had a chance yesterday to explain whether "water buffalo" was a racial epithet.

Neither side was willing to state its case publicly after the 4½-hour closed meeting before a school judicial panel. NBC News, citing anonymous sources, said a decision was put off until the fall.

Freshman Ezer Jacobowitz of Lawrence, N.Y., is accused of violating the university's code of conduct during a shouting match with a

group of boisterous black students.

Mr. Jacobowitz, 18, has said his studying was disrupted one night in January by cheering and singing by a group of black students. Several students shouted at them and Mr. Jacobowitz admitted to calling them "water buffalo," but has insisted the term has no racial connotations.

Mr. Jacobowitz has said the term may have come to mind because of the Hebrew word "behemah," which translates as "beast" but is often used among Jews to refer to someone who does not know how to behave around others. Born in Israel

and educated at a Jewish school, Mr. Jacobowitz is bilingual.

He would not describe what happened at the hearing. "I'm not allowed to comment right now. It's the rules of the school," he said. The women who filed the complaint also left without comment.

Some students have complained that "water buffalo" could be taken as a racial slur.

Mr. Jacobowitz's faculty adviser, history professor Alan Charles Kors, has accused the university of violating its procedures in presenting its case against Mr. Jacobowitz.