



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

March 24, 2020

Seth Bodnar  
Office of the President  
University of Montana  
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Missoula, Montana 59812

Via e-mail: [thepresident@umontana.edu](mailto:thepresident@umontana.edu)

Dear President Bodnar,

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide regarding an urgent matter. In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Montana (UM) is apparently urging researchers to reduce "population numbers"<sup>1</sup> in their protocols, which likely will lead to the destruction of many animals.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,<sup>2</sup> we urge UM to immediately: 1) prohibit approval of new animal protocols and experiments; 2) prohibit breeding and acquisition of new animals for laboratories; 3) finalize and end ongoing animal experiments; and, 4) prove that all of these animals and experiments are concretely advancing human health, and if they're not then switch to superior human-relevant, animal-free research methods.<sup>3</sup>

### **COVID-19: Ending Animal Experiments Protects Animals, Staff, and Patients**

UM is implementing a COVID-19 contingency plan in which "researchers with active animal studies" are urged to "consider finalizing experimental endpoints and reducing population numbers in accordance with approved animal use protocols" and to "delay starting longitudinal studies until further notice."<sup>4</sup> This begs the question why taxpayer dollars are being used on experiments that can easily be ended

<sup>1</sup> [https://missoulain.com/news/local/um-researchers-prepare-for-potential-coronavirus-interruption/article\\_fe1cc6ca-19c9-5cc6-8661-602f67c58e4b.html](https://missoulain.com/news/local/um-researchers-prepare-for-potential-coronavirus-interruption/article_fe1cc6ca-19c9-5cc6-8661-602f67c58e4b.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/14/coronavirus-pandemic-forces-research-labs-shut-down/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US\\_FINAL\\_2020\\_300.pdf](https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://missoulain.com/news/local/um-researchers-prepare-for-potential-coronavirus-interruption/article\\_fe1cc6ca-19c9-5cc6-8661-602f67c58e4b.html](https://missoulain.com/news/local/um-researchers-prepare-for-potential-coronavirus-interruption/article_fe1cc6ca-19c9-5cc6-8661-602f67c58e4b.html)

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or that involve animals who, apparently, are considered extraneous to the testing in the first place. Equally troubling is that the experiments themselves are not critical to advancing human health, since more than 90 percent of highly promising basic science discoveries (most of which involve animal experiments) do not enter routine clinical use in humans.<sup>5</sup>

We further call on UM to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UM's COVID-19 response plan (such that they may be categorized as critical, essential, necessary, and/or other similar terminology);
- 2) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will not continue as part of UM's COVID-19 response plan (such that they may be categorized as extraneous, non-critical, non-essential, ramped down, disposable, unnecessary and/or other similar terminology);
- 3) The number and species of animals who are in experimental protocols covered by item number 1 above, and the number and species of animals who are in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above; and,
- 4) The endpoint/disposition of animals used in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above, and notice of if, when, and how many of these animals have been and/or will be euthanized, culled, killed, destroyed, disposed or reduced in cage census.

You can contact me directly by e-mail at [ShalinG@peta.org](mailto:ShalinG@peta.org) or by telephone at 757-962-8325. We look forward to your swift reply to this quickly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g3387.long>