

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

March 17, 2020

Ronald J. Daniels, L.L.M., J.D.
Office of the President
242 Garland Hall
The Johns Hopkins University
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Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Via e-mail: president@jhu.edu

Dear President Daniels,

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. Today, we are releasing disturbing reports and photographs,¹ newly obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Freedom of Information Act, revealing chronic and systemic violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) in animal laboratories at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). We've also become aware that in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, JHU is apparently planning to identify – and likely soon thereafter start destroying – animals who are considered “extraneous” and not “critical” to the university’s experiments.

Based on the repeated and documented failure of JHU to abide by the AWA, and given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,² we urge JHU to immediately: 1) prohibit approval of new animal protocols and experiments; 2) prohibit breeding and acquisition of new animals for laboratories; and, 3) finalize and end ongoing animal experiments. Further, we renew our call for an end to invasive brain experiments on owls by JHU’s Shreesh Mysore and for these intelligent animals to be sent to sanctuary instead of potentially being killed as JHU responds to COVID-19.

JHU’s Culture of Noncompliance: Animal Welfare Act Violations

The records PETA obtained reveal that JHU was cited by the USDA after the agency’s inspectors found highly social primates locked in

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¹ <https://headlines.peta.org/photos-violations-agony-monkeys-johns-hopkins/>

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

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- PETA Asia
- PETA India
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- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

solitary, barren laboratory cages with no enrichment, which is mandated by law. Many are overweight and/or suffer from significant hair loss, often a sign of severe stress, which may be compounded by mind-destroying monotony causing monkeys to rip out their own hair. JHU was also cited by the USDA after a marmoset monkey died when a worker closed the cage door while the animal was in the doorway; a ball used for “enrichment” had a hole chewed into it, and a young monkey was found dead with her head stuck inside the ball after apparent prolonged exposure to cold temperatures; twelve rabbits were unable to easily access fresh drinking water; and, a rabbit died by asphyxiation after being left in a cage that was sent through a high temperature disinfecting machine, among other violations.

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

This week, JHU’s Research Animal Resources is apparently implementing part two of a contingency plan that “involves the identification of critical animals to be maintained,” presumably leading to the killing of countless animals who are not considered “critical” – which begs the question why these animals were forced to endure cruel and painful tests 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.³

As part of their COVID-19 responses, the below institutions around the country are taking proactive steps to curtail animal experiments, and we urge JHU to do the same with haste:

- At the University of Washington, at least one laboratory “is refraining from starting any new long-term animal experiments ...”⁴
- At the University of Montana, the Vice President of Research and Creative Scholarship sent an e-mail to faculty stating, “UM researchers with active animal studies should consider finalizing experimental endpoints and ... researchers should delay starting longitudinal studies until further notice.”⁵
- At the University of Michigan, the Office of the Vice President for Research states, “[Principal investigators] may want to consider the timing associated with starting new experiments and establishing new rodent breeding pairs. In addition, PIs may want to consider whether current animal studies can be judiciously ended ...”⁶
- At the University of California, Berkeley, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research states, “Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.”⁷

³ <https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g3387.long>

⁴ http://www.dailyuw.com/news/article_110ae4c2-64c4-11ea-a058-4bbb2161540d.html

⁵ https://missoulia.com/news/local/um-researchers-prepare-for-potential-coronavirus-interruption/article_fe1cc6ca-19c9-5cc6-8661-602f67c58e4b.html

⁶ <https://research.umich.edu/covid-19>

⁷ <https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/research-continuity-planning-covid-19>

- At Stanford University, an official website states, “Per the [Veterinary Service Center], research labs *should*: ... Consider delaying new projects or new animal subjects ...”⁸

We call on JHU to publicly release the following information: 1) an itemization of all experimental protocols that have “critical animals to be maintained” as part of JHU’s “Contingency Plan Phase 2;” 2) the number of how many animals fit into this “critical” category and how many are not in the “critical” category; 3) endpoint/disposition of the animals not in the “critical” category, and if killed notice of when this will happen; and, 4) confirmation as to whether or not the owls being used in Shreesh Mysore’s invasive brain experiments at JHU are among those animals the university considers to be “critical.”

Owls in the Laboratory of JHU’s Shreesh Mysore Deserve Sanctuary, Not Death

As you’ll recall, I sent a letter dated December 31, 2019, to Maryland State Senator Ben Kramer on which you were copied, and Senator Kramer subsequently held a meeting on February 17, 2020, with JHU’s dean of the medical faculty, Paul Rothman; both meetings concerned invasive and harmful taxpayer-funded experiments on barn owls conducted by JHU’s Shreesh Mysore. We have yet to receive a direct reply to our letter from JHU. We are now renewing our public call for an end to Mysore’s invasive brain experiments on owls – who are not “critical” to his purported intention of studying human attention and its disorders – and for these animals to be retired to a reputable PETA-approved sanctuary instead of potentially being killed as the university responds to COVID-19.

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

Sincerely yours,



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⁸ <https://healthalerts.stanford.edu/covid-19-information-and-resources/information-for-faculty-and-researchers/>