



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

April 10, 2020

Rebecca Blank, Ph.D.
Office of the Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Madison
161 Bascom Hall
500 Lincoln Drive
Madison, WI 53706

Via e-mail: chancellor@wisc.edu

Dear Chancellor Blank,

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. Based on the repeated and documented failure of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) to abide by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and to meet the provisions of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,¹ we urge UW-Madison 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.²

UW-Madison's Culture of Noncompliance: Violations to the Animal Welfare Act and the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals

According to public records obtained by PETA from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), UW-Madison was cited by the USDA after the agency's inspectors found that in several occasions primates were injured and had body parts amputated or lost when staff failed to lock their confinement areas allowing the animals to escape and get into fights; a marmoset had his/her femur broken due to rough handling; and a Peromyscus mouse died of hypoxia when his/her head became trapped between the cage and the lid. Additionally, public

¹ <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/14/coronavirus-pandemic-forces-research-labs-shut-down/>

² https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf

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records obtained by PETA from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) via the Freedom of Information Act show that UW-Madison has reported many violations to the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The following are a few of them: in separate incidents, various primates were injured and required veterinary attention after getting into fights when staff failed to secure their confinement areas; a marmoset was administered an overdose of an anti-inflammatory agent; a baby macaque received a greater dose of meloxicam than that approved; and 18 mice escaped after a technician forgot to place a new water bottle in their cage, and 16 of them who were found were euthanized.

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

As part of its COVID-19 contingency plan, UW-Madison informed its experimenters that only “essential research” is allowed,³ and urged them to “[s]uspend plans to order and ship animals” and “consider reduction or cessation of non-critical animal breeding, including agricultural animals and USDA-covered species.”⁴ This begs the question why taxpayer dollars are being used on experiments that can easily be ended or delayed or that involve animals who, apparently, are considered to be 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.⁵

We call on UW-Madison to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UW-Madison’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 UW-Madison’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 (e.g., in a critical and/or similar terminology category), and the number and species of animals who are in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above (e.g., not in a critical and/or similar terminology category); and,
- 4) The endpoint/disposition of animals used in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above (e.g., not in a critical and/or similar terminology category), and notice of if, when, and how many of these

³ <https://covid19.wisc.edu/research/>

⁴ <https://covid19.wisc.edu/campus-research-activities-update/>

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

animals have been and/or will be euthanized, culled, killed, destroyed, disposed or reduced in cage census.

You can contact me by e-mail at 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shalin G. Gala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S" that loops under the rest of the name.

Shalin G. Gala
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department