



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

May 20, 2020

Kent Fuchs, Ph.D.
Office of the President
c/o Beth Boone, Executive Assistant to the President
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611

Via e-mail: bboone@ufl.edu

Dear President Fuchs,

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 Florida (UF) to abide by the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), and given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,^{1,2} we urge UF 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.³

University of Florida's Culture of Noncompliance: Violations to the Animal Welfare Act

According to public records obtained by PETA from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), UF was cited by the USDA after the agency's inspectors found that an unapproved procedure was used to close a sheep's incision, which could have resulted in tissue necrosis and infection; surgical procedures performed on sheep were carried out in a filthy pen, not in a surgical suite as established in the approved protocol; a live baby deer mouse was found on the floor of the confinement area when staff failed to notice that the animal had escaped from the cage; and a high concentration of urine ammonia—that made breathing difficult—was identified in an animal confinement area.

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

² https://www.chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Euthanized-Lab/248483?cid=wcontentlist_hp

³ https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf

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

As part of its COVID-19 contingency plan, on March 23, 2020, UF informed its experimenters that “only mission-critical, essential research should continue,” and urged them to “consider reduction of animal census, including agricultural animals and USDA-covered species.”⁴ These directives likely led to the destruction of many animals, and beg 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 UF to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UF’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 UF’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 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,



Shalin G. Gala
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⁴ <https://research.ufl.edu/covid-19-updates.html>

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