



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

April 7, 2020

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Via e-mail: [president@utoronto.ca](mailto:president@utoronto.ca)

Dear President Gertler,

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. Given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,<sup>1</sup> we urge the University of Toronto (UT), 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>2</sup>

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

As part of its COVID-19 contingency plan, UT has announced that only "critical COVID-19 related research and time-sensitive critical projects" are allowed to continue.<sup>3</sup> In response to UT's COVID-19 contingency plan, at least one UT experimenter stated on March 18, 2020, "due to lab closures and #COVID-19, I have to cull around 100+ rats."<sup>4</sup> 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 by many universities 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

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

<sup>2</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>3</sup> <https://www.utoronto.ca/message-from-the-university-regarding-the-coronavirus/archive>

<sup>4</sup> <https://twitter.com/barskysa/status/1240354125021433856>

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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 call on UT to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UT'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 UT'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 an essential 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 an essential 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 an essential 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](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>