



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

September 15, 2020

Lisa R. Collier, CPA, CFE, CIDA  
Acting State Auditor  
1501 North Congress Ave.  
Austin, TX 78701

Via e-mail: [SAOIntake@sao.texas.gov](mailto:SAOIntake@sao.texas.gov); [auditor@sao.texas.gov](mailto:auditor@sao.texas.gov)

Dear Auditor Collier,

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. **Based on the information below, we request that your office audit the performance of Texas A&M University (TAMU), and the University of Texas (UT) branches at Arlington (UTA), Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), and Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB), regarding the apparent waste of state resources allocated to support animal research activities.**

In FY 2019, TAMU and the entire UT System received \$3.4 billion<sup>1,2</sup> in state appropriations, part of which may have been used to support animal experimentation activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB issued directives that likely led to the destruction of hundreds of animals they deemed extraneous, noncritical, or nonessential or described using similar terminology.

- TAMU asked its staff to "[s]uspend all research activities that have not been approved as essential," "[c]ancel all outstanding animal orders for non-essential research," "[c]ontinue to reduce cage census," and "not initiate new animal studies."<sup>3</sup>
- UTA urged its staff to "[r]educe your colony size by eliminating animals that will not be used in experiments" and to "[r]educe the

<sup>1</sup>Texas A&M University. (n.d.). *Annual financial report of the Texas A&M University system.*

<https://apps.system.tamus.edu/afdisclaimer/disclaimer.aspx?report=SOBAFY2019TAMUSCOMBO>

<sup>2</sup>The University of Texas. (2019, December 20). *Consolidated financial statements for the years ended August 31, 2019 and 2018 and independent auditors' report.*

<https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/documents/report-state/2020/consolidated-annual-financial-report-fy-2019/ut-system-audit-af-2019.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Texas A&M University. (2020, March 25). *Research guidance during COVID-19.* [https://vpr.tamu.edu/covid-19?\\_ga=2.175374181.657779861.1584721438-565303371.15834](https://vpr.tamu.edu/covid-19?_ga=2.175374181.657779861.1584721438-565303371.15834)

Washington, D.C.  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Berkeley  
2855 Telegraph Ave.  
Ste. 301  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
510-763-PETA

Info@peta.org  
PETA.org

Affiliates:

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

number of breeding cages in your colony if you will not be using these animals."<sup>4</sup>

- UTHSCSA asked its staff to "DELAY initiation of new, approved animal experiments that would increase the number of cages in-house," to "focus their efforts on maintaining or decreasing the current number of cages in their rodent colony," and to "review current rodent cage counts with their staff and remove excess from their census."<sup>5</sup>
- UTMB requested that its staff "not initiate any new animal projects and consider reducing current rodent colony size as much and as quickly as possible," "reduce experiments and animal use whenever possible," "[l]imit rodent breeding to maintenance of replacement breeders only," "[d]elay experiments requiring significant post-procedural care," and "[d]elay non-time-sensitive animal experiments."<sup>6</sup>

That activities supporting unnecessary, "non-essential," noncritical, or extraneous animal experimentation are taking place at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB at an apparent annual cost of millions of dollars, some of which may have been funded by the state, is the height of absurdity and wastefulness, and it is well within the mandate of your office to investigate this matter and rectify it.

**We respectfully urge that your office investigate and assess the following information as it relates to the apparent waste of state funds by TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB on activities supporting experiments—and/or on the animals used in them—that the schools deemed extraneous during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

- 1) Any and all state-funded activities supporting animal experiments that TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB suspended and/or ended in accordance with its response to COVID-19, such that the experiments may be categorized as unnecessary, extraneous, noncritical, or "non-essential," or described using similar terminology

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<sup>4</sup>University of Texas–Arlington. (2020, March 19). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) impact on UTA research*. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/University-of-Texas-at-Arlington-COVID-19-directive-regarding-animal-research.pdf>. The original source of this information has been updated (<https://resources.uta.edu/research/coronavirus/index.php>).

<sup>5</sup>University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. (2020, March 30). *A message from the vice president for research*. <https://wp.uthscsa.edu/coronavirus/2020/03/30/03-30-20-vpr-message/>

<sup>6</sup>University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. (2020, March 24). *UTMB ARC COVID-19 response updates*. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/University-of-Texas-Medical-Branch-at-Galveston-COVID-19-directive-regarding-animal-research.pdf>. Access to the original source of this information is not consistent, and users might be required to log in ([https://liveutmb.sharepoint.com/sites/collaboration/webfiles/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fcollaboration%2Fwebfiles%2FShared%20Documents%2FResearch%20Resources%2FResearch%20Resources%20Webfiles%2FCOVID19AnimalSubjects%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fcollaboration%2Fwebfiles%2FShared%20Documents%2FResearch%20Resources%2FResearch%20Resources%20Webfiles&p=true&originalPath=aHR0cHM6Ly9saXZldXRtYi5zaGFyZXBvaW50LmNvbS86Yjovcy9jb2xsYWJvcnF0aW9uL3dlYmZpbGVzL0VVdERsZjRGN1ExSnZsaEN6YWVuYkhvQIA5NnhZcm9odjUzTTYxOFpqZ3NMbHc\\_cnrpbWU9U19BaFJQSG0xMGc](https://liveutmb.sharepoint.com/sites/collaboration/webfiles/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fcollaboration%2Fwebfiles%2FShared%20Documents%2FResearch%20Resources%2FResearch%20Resources%20Webfiles%2FCOVID19AnimalSubjects%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fcollaboration%2Fwebfiles%2FShared%20Documents%2FResearch%20Resources%2FResearch%20Resources%20Webfiles&p=true&originalPath=aHR0cHM6Ly9saXZldXRtYi5zaGFyZXBvaW50LmNvbS86Yjovcy9jb2xsYWJvcnF0aW9uL3dlYmZpbGVzL0VVdERsZjRGN1ExSnZsaEN6YWVuYkhvQIA5NnhZcm9odjUzTTYxOFpqZ3NMbHc_cnrpbWU9U19BaFJQSG0xMGc)).

- 2) The number and species of any and all animals used in state-funded research activities at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB covered by item number 1 above
- 3) The number and species of any and all animals used in state-funded experiments who are categorized by TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB as unnecessary, extraneous, noncritical, or nonessential or described using similar terminology
- 4) The endpoint disposition (to include—but not be limited to—euthanasia, cull, sacrifice, killing, destruction, disposal, and/or reduction in cage census) of any and all animals used in state-funded experiments at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB covered by item number 1 above
- 5) The endpoint disposition (to include—but not be limited to—euthanasia, cull, sacrifice, killing, destruction, disposal, and/or reduction in cage census) of any and all animals at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB used in experiments receiving state funds who are themselves covered by item number 3 above
- 6) State funds used to support experiments at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB covered by item number 1 above, to include—but not be limited to—the purchase, breeding, housing, feeding, maintenance, and/or veterinary care of any and all animals used in these experiments, and/or the payment of salaries and/or wages of personnel who attended to any and all animals used in these experiments
- 7) State funds used to purchase, breed, house, feed, maintain, or administer veterinary care to any and all animals—or pay the salaries and/or wages of personnel who attended to them—at TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB covered by item number 3 above

Furthermore, the decision by TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB to keep purchasing, breeding, housing, feeding, and maintaining animals to be used in state-funded research activities—where the experiments or animals themselves are deemed unnecessary, nonessential, noncritical, or extraneous or described using similar terminology—is at odds with the U.S. Public Health Service's *Guide for the Care and Use of Animals*, which includes the principle of "consideration of alternatives (in vitro systems, computer simulations, and/or mathematical models) to reduce or replace the use of animals,"<sup>7</sup> and with the *U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training* (1985), which state, "The animals selected for a procedure should be of an appropriate species and quality and the minimum number required to obtain valid results."<sup>8</sup>

When TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB buy, breed, trap, and/or use animals who at any time—not just during the COVID-19 pandemic—can be deemed unnecessary, extraneous, nonessential, or noncritical or described using similar terminology, they

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<sup>7</sup>National Research Council (U.S.) Committee for the Update of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. (2011). *Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals*. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/guide-for-the-care-and-use-of-laboratory-animals.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>National Research Council (U.S.) Committee for the Update of the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. (2011). *Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals. Appendix B: U.S. government principles for the utilization and care of vertebrate animals used in testing, research, and training*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK54048/>.

are squandering limited public resources and flouting the bedrock "3Rs" principles of reducing, replacing, and refining the use of animals in experimentation that are enshrined in government regulations and policies.

Moreover, the Congressional Research Service has found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, "[s]uspending research may result in additional costs for activities such as animal care," and "[r]estarting research, when conditions permit, may also incur costs for staff time and supplies to ... reestablish laboratory animal populations."<sup>9</sup> Texas taxpayers should not be responsible for incurring additional costs to re-establish research activities involving animals, since TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB deemed many of them not to be essential to the experiments and because resuming these activities and repopulating animals in laboratories at taxpayers' expense would appear to violate federal regulations and policies that mandate the minimization of animal use in experiments.

**Based on this information, we urge your office to assess the use of public money, personnel, property, equipment, and space by TAMU, UTA, UTHSCSA, and UTMB for activities supporting experiments on animals that they deem unnecessary, extraneous, nonessential, or noncritical or describe using similar terminology. If wastefulness is corroborated, we request that you take all corrective actions to ensure that current state-funded research activities involving such animals are permanently terminated, that new state-funded research activities that include such animals are no longer approved, and that the breeding and acquisition of such animals for state-funded research activities are prohibited.**

You can contact me at [ShalinG@peta.org](mailto:ShalinG@peta.org). We look forward to your reply regarding this important matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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

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<sup>9</sup>Congressional Research Service. (2020, April 10). *Effects of COVID-19 on the federal research and development enterprise*. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46309>.