



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

September 1, 2020

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Via e-mail: [Betty.J.Goldentyer@usda.gov](mailto:Betty.J.Goldentyer@usda.gov)

Dear Dr. Goldentyer,

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) investigate a number of concerns related to the animal research program at the Washington National Primate Research Center (WaNPRC) at the University of Washington (UW; USDA Certificate No. 91-R-0001). I am submitting this complaint regarding the treatment and care of animals at WaNPRC, the lack of transparency and failure to immediately report primate welfare issues to the university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and the lack of adequate oversight provided by the UW IACUC, due likely in part to the current composition of the UW IACUC.

The concerns summarized below are based on several sets of documents. Through the Freedom of Information Act, PETA has recently received the meeting minutes of WaNPRC's Senior Management Team for November and December of 2018. PETA is also in possession of the 2018 November and December meeting minutes from the UW IACUC as well as transcripts of the May and June 2020 UW IACUC meetings.

We believe that WaNPRC has consistently violated the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and its implementing Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs). The documentation shows that WaNPRC has:

1. Failed to handle animals in a way that does not cause trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort [9 CFR § 2.38(f)(1)]

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2. Failed to ensure that personnel conducting procedures are qualified to perform their duties [9 CFR § 2.32(a)]
3. Failed to provide structurally sound housing for nonhuman primates [9 CFR §§ 3.80; 3.75(a)]

In addition, the information gathered by PETA seems to indicate that UW's IACUC failed to carry out its legally mandated responsibilities as specified in the AWRs. In particular, the UW IACUC:

1. Failed to make recommendations to the Institutional Official regarding any aspect of the research facility's animal program, facilities, or personnel training [9 C.F.R. §2.31(c)(5)]
2. Failed to ensure that personnel conducting procedures on the species being maintained or studied will be appropriately qualified and trained in those procedures [9 C.F.R. §2.31(d)(viii)]

### **Failure to handle animals humanely**

Section 2.38(f)(1) of the AWRs states: "Handling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort."

However, in late April 2020 a macaque at the WaNPRC Western facility was left in a trapping run for more than 24 hours without food or water. This incident was initially reported to the UW IACUC at the May 21, 2020 meeting<sup>1</sup>. UW attending veterinarian, Kim Stocking, stated that an investigation revealed that both an animal technician and a veterinary technician had seen the macaque in the compound on **Saturday morning** when she received medication. On **Sunday afternoon**, a different animal technician and veterinary technician saw that the monkey was not in the compound. Neither of the technicians reported the monkey missing or contacted their supervisor(s). It was not until **Monday morning** that supervisors were notified and an effort was made to locate the monkey. The monkey was found confined in the trapping run with no water or food. The monkey was moderately dehydrated and required immediate treatment.

Following notification of this incident, the UW IACUC failed to recommend any corrective actions be directed at WaNPRC during their May, June or July 2020 meetings<sup>2</sup>. Nor is there any indication that the UW IACUC brought this egregious example of training and leadership incompetence to the attention of the Institutional Official as would be expected under 9 C.F.R. §2.31(c)(5). The UW IACUC also failed to act on their responsibility to guarantee that WaNPRC personnel, when conducting even

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<sup>1</sup> See attached May 21, 2020 UW IACUC meeting transcript, pp.11-17

<sup>2</sup> See attached June 18, 2020 UW IACUC meeting transcript pp.52-53 and July 16, 2020 UW IACUC meeting transcript pp. 91-95

the *most basic* husbandry procedures of assuring that all animals are accounted for, are appropriately qualified and trained in those procedures [9 C.F.R. §2.31(d)(viii)].

### **Failure to ensure that personnel are qualified to perform their duties**

Section 2.32(a) of the AWRs states: “It shall be the responsibility of the research facility to ensure that all scientists, research technicians, animal technicians, and other personnel involved in animal care, treatment, and use are qualified to perform their duties. This responsibility shall be fulfilled in part through the provision of training and instruction to those personnel.”

However, the failure by the animal and veterinary technicians to alert their immediate supervisors when they were unable to locate the monkey referenced above suggests a lack of adequate training, specific operating procedures (SOP) and common sense. It is our understanding that basic husbandry protocols would require that the monkeys in this corral would have been observed and fed twice daily. There is no evidence to suggest that this monkey was observed and/or medicated by staff after Saturday morning.

Indeed, there appears to be a pattern of WaNPRC leadership failing to ensure that their staff are adequately trained to perform their duties as is evidenced by the notes from the November 15, 2018, WaNPRC Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting<sup>3</sup>. Sally Thompson-Iritani, former Director of the UW Office of Animal Welfare and current Associate Director of WaNPRC included the following updates in 11/15/2018 SMT meeting agenda:

*“Update on AZ incident - animal down, human in surgery.”*

*“The other incident - Western had a tech doing a cage change out and one animal went to cage wash, but was found.”*

It is not clear from these notes the condition of the monkey who “went to the cage wash, but was found,” but what seems obvious is that once again a lack of training, and/or compliance with SOPs resulted in workers failing to handle a vulnerable monkey in a competent and humane manner.

The reference in these SMT meeting notes to a monkey “down” and a “human in surgery” following an incident at the WaNPRC Arizona breeding facility is shocking. However, what is even more astonishing is that during the November 15, 2018, UW IACUC meetings<sup>4</sup>, neither of these incidents discussed by Sally Thompson-Iritani during the WaNPRC SMT meeting were reported to the full IACUC and there is no evidence that these incidents were reported to the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as required. Nor is there any indication that the UW IACUC brought these egregious examples of training and leadership incompetence

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<sup>3</sup> See November 15, 2018 WaNPRC Senior Management Team meeting agenda pp. 102-103

<sup>4</sup> See November 15, 2018 UW IACUC meeting minutes pp. 104-110

to the attention of the Institutional Official as would be expected under 9 C.F.R. §2.31(c)(5).

### **Failure to provide structurally sound housing for nonhuman primate**

Section 3.80(a)(2) of the AWRs states: “Primary enclosures must be constructed and maintained so that they ... [c]ontain the nonhuman primates securely and prevent accidental opening of the enclosure, including opening by the animal.”

However, PETA’s review of the December 3, 2018, WaNPRC SMT meeting agenda<sup>5</sup> revealed that WaNPRC’s Associate Director, Sally Thompson-Iritani, discussed multiple incidents where monkeys had been found “out of cage”:

#### ***Out of Cage Incidents - Ben/Sally***

*“There are currently six different styles of cages, it is not in the best interests of the staff and animals. There have been a number of “out of cage” incidents. Last week, there were a lot of incidents with the Seattle-style cages in the ARCF.”*

Once again, none of these “out of cage” incidents were disclosed during UW IACUC December 18, 2018, meeting<sup>6</sup> and there is no evidence that these incidents were reported to OLAW.

Animal escapes and injuries appear to be rampant at the WaNPRC facilities in Seattle and Arizona. While some of these violations of [9 CFR §§ 3.80; 3.75(a)] have been reported to USDA/OLAW the attached documentation indicates that many other incidents have not been reported to the UW IACUC or to OLAW and that the UW IACUC consistently fails to hold WaNPRC leadership accountable for escapes that routinely cause significant injuries or death to the monkeys.

Indeed, since UW hasn’t been cited and/or held responsible for these “out of cage” incidents-- including a recent January 2020 incident at the WaNPRC Arizona breeding facility where injuries occurred—the university appears to have taken a *laissez faire* attitude on the serious matter of “out of cage” incidents, jeopardizing the safety of monkeys and staff members.

UW’s apparent contempt for animal welfare regulations appears to be amplified by Sally Thompson-Iritani who, in apparent conflict of interest, held both the position of Director of the UW Office of Animal Welfare and Associate Director of WaNPRC immediately prior to the 2018 incidents reported above. Dr. Thompson-Iritani was elevated by UW’s Institutional Official, Dave Anderson, (himself a former director of WaNPRC), to the position of interim Director of WaNPRC in late 2019. This raises the very serious question of whether Dr. Thompson-Iritani has been inordinately “influenced” by her competing positions and intimate working relationship with WaNPRC and UW administration.

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<sup>5</sup> See December 3, 2018 WaNPRC Senior Management Team meeting agenda pp. 111

<sup>6</sup> See December 18, 2018 UW IACUC meeting minutes pp. 112-118

Moreover, and deeply concerning is the fact that the current composition of the UW IACUC is contrary to the NIH "[Guidance on Qualifications of IACUC Nonscientific and Nonaffiliated Members NOT-OD-15-109](#)"—[guidance that mirrors requirements pertaining to IACUC composition in the AWA and its implementing regulations](#). The UW IACUC includes a voting member (J.B.)<sup>7</sup>, designated as "unaffiliated" though as recently as 2014 this individual served as a UW Biosafety Officer on the UW's Institutional Biosafety Committee<sup>8</sup>. As stated in NOT-OD-15-109 the 'unaffiliated' member should have no discernible ties or affiliations to the institution and "[r]eal or perceived conflicts of interest must be avoided to ensure the IACUC's and the institution's integrity. Appointment of an individual who is unambiguously unaffiliated is the most effective way to fulfill the intent of the Policy."

The UW IACUC has further undermined the intent of the Health Research Extension Act of 1985 with their appointment of the [Ken Gordon](#) (K.G.)<sup>9</sup>, executive director of the Northwest Association for Biomedical Research (NWABR), as a "nonscientific" member. NOT-OD-15-109 clearly states that the intent of PHS Policy is to have a diversity of perspectives in the membership of the committee with the expectation that the nonscientific member is an individual "with a naïve attitude with regard to science and scientific activities." Again, this reflects the intention of similar language in the AWA and its implementing regulations, a concordance that is strengthened by the initiatives taken toward agency harmonization to reduce regulatory burden. NWABR's mission is to promote biomedical research. We also note that several members of the UW IACUC serve as members of the NWABR board of directors, and that UW is a substantial donor to NWABR.

UW's Institutional Official, David Anderson, appointed these individuals who do not appear to meet the intent of the PHS Policy, The Guide, and the AWA to serve as the nonscientist and nonaffiliated members, and the UW IACUC chair, Jane Sullivan, routinely assigns these members to single-handedly conduct designated member review of research projects with the authority to approve, require modifications in (to secure approval) or request full committee review of research projects.

All this appears to violate the letter and spirit of the AWA and its implementing regulations. We respectfully request that your agency's Animal Care (AC) and Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) programs investigate the conduct of the IACUC, WaNPRC, its leadership, and its employees and take enforcement action against all appropriate parties.

I look forward to hearing from you and am available to assist in your investigation. I can be reached at 206-372-6190/907-855-1767 or [LisaJE@peta.org](mailto:LisaJE@peta.org).

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<sup>7</sup> See attached UW IACUC roster Feb 21, 2020 pg. 119

<sup>8</sup> See the highlighted portions of the October 15, 2014 meeting minutes from the UW Institutional Biosafety Committee meeting pp. 120-128

<sup>9</sup> See attached UW IACUC roster Feb 21, 2020 pg.119

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Jones-Engel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lisa Jones-Engel, PhD  
Senior Science Advisor, Primate Experimentation  
Laboratory Investigations Department

