

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

November 23, 2020

Cara M. Christ, MD, MS  
Director  
Arizona Department of Health Services  
150 North 18th Avenue  
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Via e-mail: [cara.christ@azdhs.gov](mailto:cara.christ@azdhs.gov)

Dear Dr. Christ,

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 related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which in Arizona has resulted in more than 299,000 cases and more than 6,400 deaths.<sup>1</sup> **Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Arizona and the continued high infection rates throughout the country, we urge you to intervene for the sake of public health and permanently end experiments on animals at laboratories and universities in your state, starting with those already deemed by institutions themselves to be non-essential during the initial shutdown because of COVID-19.**

In response to the shutdown, laboratories throughout Arizona and the U.S. deemed experiments and the animals used in them to be "extraneous" or "non-essential," among other similar terms—and therefore euthanized thousands of these animals assigned to laboratory experiments. Below are the schools in Arizona that issued guidance indicating, or likely indicating, the culling of animals in laboratories in response to COVID-19:

- Arizona State University (ASU): The school instructed its experimenters to "not begin any additional animal experiments" and to "[e]stablish protocols ... to include ... [the] halt of experiments."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Covid in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Nov. 22]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Laboratory ramp-down guidance and checklist. [accessed 2020 Aug. 14]. <https://www.asu.edu/ehs/documents/asu-research-lab-ramp-down-guidance.pdf>.

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

- University of Arizona (UArizona): The school provided guidance for experimenters to “completely ramp down” their laboratories.<sup>3</sup>

PETA questions why any of these animals are being bought, bred, trapped, or experimented on in the first place since they’re now, in response to the pandemic, so readily being disposed of and since experiments are now being ended or delayed. Expending precious research resources and taxpayer funds on animal testing—especially experiments and the animals used in them deemed by the institutions themselves not to be essential—is the height of absurdity and waste and should not continue, nor should laboratory personnel endanger their health for such experiments.

Research facilities and universities, including ASU and UArizona, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.<sup>4</sup> Once-safe activities—including working in close proximity to others in enclosed spaces like laboratories—will continue to pose a risk to human health for the foreseeable future. Particularly given that so many of these animal experiments have already been determined to be non-essential, allowing animal experiments to resume in Arizona cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Arizona is forced to reverse its reopening, more animals will undoubtedly be euthanized and money that could otherwise have gone to more effective and human-relevant, non-animal studies benefiting public health will be wasted. The possibility that Arizona may need to shut down once more cannot be discounted. Dr. Anthony Fauci previously urged states with surging infection rates to “seriously look at shutting down” again.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-one states have tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.<sup>6</sup>

As the head of the state health agency, per A.R.S. § 36-787, you have the authority to act to protect public health during a state of emergency such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Would you please intervene to end experiments on animals, starting with those previously deemed by institutions to be non-essential or described using similar terminology, which pose an unjustifiable risk to those working in laboratories and the public more broadly?

You can contact me at [ShalinG@peta.org](mailto:ShalinG@peta.org) or 757-962-8325. We look forward to your reply to this rapidly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup>Procedure for temporary laboratory closure. [accessed 2020 Aug. 14].

<https://research.arizona.edu/covid19/guidance/procedure-temporary-laboratory-closure>.

<sup>4</sup>Covid-19: U.S. records 1 million new cases in a week. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Nov. 16].

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/11/15/world/covid-19-coronavirus>.

<sup>5</sup>Feuer W. 2020 July 9. States with severe coronavirus outbreaks should ‘seriously look at shutting down,’ Dr. Fauci says. *CNBC*. [accessed 2020 Nov. 17]. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/09/states-with-severe-coronavirus-outbreaks-should-seriously-look-at-shutting-down-dr-fauci-says.html>.

<sup>6</sup>COVID-19 restrictions: Map of COVID-19 case trends, restrictions and mobility. *USA Today*. [accessed 2020 Nov. 22]. <https://www.usatoday.com/storytelling/coronavirus-reopening-america-map/#restrictions>.

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