

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Andy Beshear
Governor
Commonwealth of KentuckyEric Friedlander
Secretary
Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family ServicesVia e-mail: andy.beshear@ky.gov; eric.friedlander@ky.gov

Dear Governor Beshear and Secretary Friedlander,

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 Kentucky has resulted in more than 187,000 cases and more than 2,000 deaths.¹

Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Kentucky 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, experimenters at laboratories in Kentucky and throughout 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. The University of Louisville (UofL) informed its experimenters that “all non-essential research activities are suspended” and “[n]on-essential research studies and experiments that have not yet started should be immediately postponed.”²

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

¹Covid in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 2]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

²Gardner K.H. 2020 March 24. Updated Covid-19 guidelines for the UofL research community. [accessed 2020 Nov. 25]. <https://louisville.edu/medicine/tech/updated-covid-19-guidelines-for-the-uofl-research-community-updated-3-24-2020>.

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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 to be “non-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 UofL, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates in Kentucky and throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.^{3,4} 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 Kentucky cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Kentucky is forced to shut down again, 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 Kentucky 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.⁵ Forty states, including Kentucky, tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.⁶

We urge you, as leaders of the response to COVID-19 in Kentucky, to use your concurrent authority 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 or 757-962-8325. We look forward to your reply to this rapidly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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³Acquisto A. 2020 Dec. 1. ‘The very worst day.’ Kentucky shatters records for new coronavirus cases and deaths. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 1].

<https://www.kentucky.com/news/coronavirus/article247529195.html>.

⁴Covid-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>.

⁵Feuer 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>.

⁶COVID-19 restrictions: Map of COVID-19 case trends, restrictions and mobility. *USA Today*. [accessed 2020 Nov. 30]. <https://www.usatoday.com/storytelling/coronavirus-reopening-america-map/#restrictions>.