

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 7, 2020

The Honorable Mike DeWine
Governor
State of Ohio
c/o Laurel Dawson, Chief of Staff

Stephanie McCloud
Director
Ohio Department of Health

Via e-mail: laurel.dawson@governor.ohio.gov;
stephanie.mccloud@odh.ohio.gov

Dear Governor DeWine and Director McCloud,

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 Ohio has resulted in more than 475,000 cases and more than 6,900 deaths.¹ **Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Ohio 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 throughout Ohio 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 Ohio that issued guidance indicating, or likely indicating, the culling of animals in laboratories in response to COVID-19:

- The Ohio State University (OSU): The school informed its experimenters that “[o]nly critical research that needs to be done in the lab should be being conducted on campus at this

¹Covid in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 7]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

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- time”² and instructed its University Laboratory Animal Resources staff to “ethanize animals that they identify meet [Early Removal Criteria].”³
- University of Cincinnati (UC): The school informed its experimenters that “only approved Critical [*sic*] research activities” are allowed⁴ and urged them to “prioritize ongoing essential research,” “[c]onsider delaying new projects and delaying acquisition of new animal subjects,” and “[r]educe rodent breeding to only numbers required to maintain lines.”⁵

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 to be not “critical”—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 OSU and UC, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.⁶ Among those who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 in Ohio is state Rep. Rick Carfagna.⁷ 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 Ohio cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Ohio 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

²Stone M.O. 2020 March 18. [accessed 2020 Dec. 3].

https://research.osu.edu/files/OhioState_Morley_Stone-letter-deans-ADRs.pdf.

³2020 March 30. Guidelines for animal colony maintenance during the university state of emergency. [accessed 2020 Dec. 3]. <https://orrr.osu.edu/2020/03/31/guidelines-for-animal-colony-maintenance-during-the-university-state-of-emergency/>.

⁴Limbach P. 2020 March 23. Coronavirus and your research. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/University-of-Cincinnati-COVID-19-directive-regarding-animal-research.pdf>. The original source of this information has been updated (<https://research.uc.edu/coronavirus-and-your-research>).

⁵2020 March 17. Recent updates. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/University-of-Cincinnati-COVID-19-guidance-regarding-animal-research.pdf>. The original source of this information has been removed from UC’s website (https://researchhow2.uc.edu/docs/default-source/default-document-library/uc-research-continuity-planning-guidance-033020.pdf?sfvrsn=949f5520_14).

⁶Covid-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>.

⁷Balmert J. 2020 Dec. 4. Ohio lawmaker tests positive for COVID-19 after attending session, committees this week. *Cincinnati Enquirer*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 5]. <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2020/12/04/ohio-lawmaker-tests-positive-covid-19-after-working-statehouse/3833796001/>.

Ohio 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.⁸ Forty states, including Ohio, tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.⁹

We urge you, as leaders of the response to COVID-19 in Ohio, 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,

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'.

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

⁸Feuer 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>.

⁹COVID-19 restrictions: Map of COVID-19 case trends, restrictions and mobility. *USA Today*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 3]. <https://www.usatoday.com/storytelling/coronavirus-reopening-america-map/#restrictions>.