

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor
State of Wisconsin
c/o Maggie Gau, Chief of Staff

Andrea Palm
Secretary-Designee
Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Via e-mail: maggie.gau@wisconsin.gov;
andrea.palm@dhs.wisconsin.gov

Dear Governor Evers and Secretary-Designee Palm,

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 Wisconsin has resulted in more than 452,000 cases and more than 4,100 deaths.¹ **Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin that issued guidance indicating, or likely indicating, the culling of animals in laboratories in response to COVID-19:

- Marquette University: The school requested that its experimenters identify “[i]rreplaceable animals,” cease or

¹Covid in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 10]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

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- reduce “[b]reeding,” and cease “[a]ll ordering of new animals.”²
- The University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW–Madison): The school informed its experimenters that only “essential research” would be allowed³ and urged them to “[s]uspend plans to order and ship animals” and “consider reduction or cessation of non-critical animal breeding, including agricultural animals and USDA-covered species.”⁴

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 Marquette and UW–Madison, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.⁵ Just this week, COVID-19 surpassed accidents as the third leading cause of death in Wisconsin.⁶ 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 Wisconsin cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin 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.⁷ Forty states, including Wisconsin, tightened restrictions in November in light of

²2020 March 23. Marquette University laboratory ramp-down instructions. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. <https://www.marquette.edu/innovation/documents/ramp-down.pdf>.

³2020 March 22. Researchers. [accessed 2020 April 1]. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200401013444/https://covid19.wisc.edu/research/>. The original source of this information has been changed (<https://covid19.wisc.edu/research/>).

⁴2020 March 19. Campus research activities update. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. <https://covid19.wisc.edu/campus-research-activities-update/>.

⁵Covid-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>.

⁶WBAY news staff. 2020 Dec. 8. COVID-19 surpasses accidents as 3rd leading cause of death in Wisconsin. *WBAY*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. <https://www.wbay.com/2020/12/08/covid-19-surpasses-accidents-as-3rd-leading-cause-of-death-in-wisconsin/>.

⁷Feuer 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>.

the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.⁸

We urge you, as leaders of the response to COVID-19 in Wisconsin, 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" that loops under the rest of the name.

Shalin G. Gala
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods
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⁸COVID-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>.