

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Gary Herbert  
Governor  
State of Utah

Richard Saunders  
Interim Executive Director  
Utah Department of Health

Via e-mail: [gherbert@utah.gov](mailto:gherbert@utah.gov); [rsaunders@utah.gov](mailto:rsaunders@utah.gov)

Dear Governor Herbert and Executive Director Saunders,

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 Utah has resulted in more than 219,000 cases and more than 900 deaths.<sup>1</sup>

**Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Utah 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 Utah 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. Utah State University’s (USU) Laboratory Animal Research Center issued an “Epidemic Response Plan” that included actions from the “cessation of non-critical animal breeding” to the “[t]argeted euthanasia of non-critical rats and mice” and the “[e]uthanasia of all animals.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Covid in the U.S.: Latest map and case count. *New York Times*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

<sup>2</sup>2020 March 23. Utah State University Laboratory Animal Research Center (LARC) epidemic response plan. [accessed 2020 Dec. 8]. [https://research.usu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USU-LARC-Epidemic-Response-Plan\\_Color-Coded-3-23-20.pdf](https://research.usu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/USU-LARC-Epidemic-Response-Plan_Color-Coded-3-23-20.pdf).

Washington  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org  
PETA.org

Affiliates:

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

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 “non-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 USU, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates in Utah and throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.<sup>3,4</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 Utah cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Utah 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 Utah 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> Forty states, including Utah, tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.<sup>6</sup>

We urge you, as leaders of the response to COVID-19 in Utah, 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](mailto:ShalinG@peta.org) or 757-962-8325. We look forward to your reply to this rapidly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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

---

<sup>3</sup>Alberty E. 2020 Dec. 7. Utah’s alarmingly high coronavirus positive rate goes up again. *Salt Lake Tribune*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 8]. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2020/12/07/record-high-percentage/>.

<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. 30]. <https://www.usatoday.com/storytelling/coronavirus-reopening-america-map/#restrictions>.