

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Governor
State of MarylandDennis Schrader
Acting Secretary
Maryland Department of HealthVia e-mail: larry.hogan@maryland.gov;
dennis.schrader@maryland.gov

Dear Governor Hogan and Secretary Schrader,

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 Maryland has resulted in more than 201,000 cases and more than 4,600 deaths.¹ **Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Maryland 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 Maryland 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 Maryland that issued guidance indicating, or likely indicating, the culling of animals in laboratories in response to COVID-19:

- University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB): The school asked its experimenters to “[r]educe colony size by euthanizing excess animals” and “consider evaluating all animals for

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>.

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- status, meaning ‘high priority’, ‘low priority’ and ‘euthanize first.’ ”²
- University of Maryland, College Park (UMD): The school informed its experimenters that “all basic and animal research experimentation requiring a physical presence at UMD will cease, unless specifically exempted by Deans/VPR.”³

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 UMB and UMD, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.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 Maryland cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Maryland 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 Maryland 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 Maryland, tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states have extended previously implemented restrictions.⁶

²2020 March 18. Research Advisory Task Force (COVID-19): Final UMB policy based upon the committee report and recommendations. [accessed 2020 Nov. 27].

<https://files.constantcontact.com/504da196201/008a10c3-b78f-461c-9a04-15c85e75a12d.pdf>.

³2020 March 23. Animal research guidance, March 23, 2020. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/University-of-Maryland-College-Park-COVID-19-directive-regarding-animal-research.pdf>. The original source of this information is no longer available online

(<https://research.umd.edu/sites/default/files/documents/DLAR%20Guidance%20SEVERE%203-23-20.pdf>).

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>.

We urge you, as leaders of the response to COVID-19 in Maryland, 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, looping initial "S" that extends to the left.

Shalin G. Gala
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods
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