

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Jim Justice
Governor
State of West Virginia
c/o Mike Hall, Chief of Staff

Bill J. Crouch
Cabinet Secretary
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

Via e-mail: mike.hall@wv.gov; bill.j.crouch@wv.gov

Dear Governor Justice and Secretary Crouch,

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 West Virginia has resulted in more than 58,000 cases and more than 900 deaths.¹

Given the uncertainty of the reopening of West Virginia 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 West Virginia 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. West Virginia University (WVU) requested that its experimenters “look through their [animal] colonies and make sure that they are not keeping lines that are not necessary,” which resulted in the euthanasia of at least 18% of mice in WVU laboratories.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. 10]. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>.

²Brown G. 2020 March 24. Potential lack of staff leads to research animal reduction. *The DA*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. https://www.thedaonline.com/news/lack-of-research-staff-leads-to-animal-euthanasia/article_6105137c-6d60-11ea-a18c-07afbd845107.html.

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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 “not necessary”—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 WVU, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs,³ and West Virginia is reporting record numbers of deaths due to COVID-19.⁴ 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 West Virginia cannot be justified.

Moreover, if West Virginia 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 West Virginia 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 West Virginia, 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 West Virginia, 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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³Covid-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>.

⁴Patterson J. 2020 Dec. 9. Gov. Justice gives COVID-19 update following record number of deaths. *WOWK 13 News*. [accessed 2020 Dec. 9]. <https://www.wowktv.com/news/west-virginia/gov-justice-gives-covid-19-update-following-record-number-of-deaths/>.

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>.