

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

December 1, 2020

Brian P. Kemp
Governor
State of GeorgiaKathleen E. Toomey, MD, MPH
Commissioner
Georgia Department of Public HealthVia e-mail: brian.kemp@georgia.gov; kathleen.toomey@dph.ga.gov

Dear Governor Kemp and Commissioner Toomey,

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 Georgia has resulted in more than 454,000 cases and more than 9,100 deaths.¹ **Given the uncertainty of the reopening of Georgia 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 Georgia 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 Georgia that issued guidance indicating, or likely indicating, the culling of animals in laboratories in response to COVID-19:

- Georgia Tech: The school instructed its experimenters to “ramp down operations” and “identify essential research experiments,” which it claimed “should be a limited set of the current laboratory bench-based experimentation.”²

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

²Abdallah C.T. 2020 March 17. Research ramp down plan. [accessed 2020 Nov. 23]. <https://research.gatech.edu/research-ramp-down-plan>.

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- University of Georgia (UGA): The school urged its experimenters to stop “[a]ll non-essential [animal] research ... as soon as possible.”³ The university also issued a plan that instructed experimenters to “[c]ull animals not needed and begin breeding solely to maintain valuable colonies”; “[f]lag most valuable rat and mouse cages ... as ‘VIP’ ”; “[e]uthanize rodents requiring repeated treatment when research staff are unable to complete them”; conduct “[t]argeted euthanasia of mice and rats, for non-‘VIP’, priority save, cages”; and “[e]uthanize remaining animals as outlined in the URAR disaster plan, following sentient animal order.”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 to be “non-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 Georgia Tech and UGA, are carrying out plans for a return to laboratory experiments. However, infection rates throughout the U.S. recently hit record highs.⁵ 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 Georgia cannot be justified.

Moreover, if Georgia 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 Georgia 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.⁶ Forty states tightened restrictions in November in light of the worsening pandemic; other states, including Georgia, have extended previously implemented restrictions.⁷

³2020 March 23. Guidance on essential animal research. [accessed 2020 Nov. 23].

https://research.uga.edu/docs/units/urar/EssentialAnimalResearch_20200323.pdf.

⁴2020 March 23. UGA University Research Animal Resources (URAR) and researcher pandemic service reduction plan. [accessed 2020 Nov. 23].

https://research.uga.edu/docs/units/urar/UGA_URAR_service_reduction_plan_COVID-19_20200323.pdf.

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>.

⁶Feuer 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>.

⁷COVID-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 Georgia, 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
Laboratory Investigations Department