

March 29, 2016

Dr. Celeste Philip  
Interim State Surgeon General  
Florida Department of Health  
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Dr. Philip:

Your office recently declared Zika as a public health emergency in Florida, recommending residents drain standing water and wear insect repellent as a way to curb the virus's spread. As you know, monkeys, like humans, are a natural host for the Zika virus.

That is why I was shocked to learn from my friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that Hendry County, Florida has quietly become host to several primate dealers that import, warehouse, and sell monkeys for experimentation. At these facilities, thousands of monkeys are kept in crowded open-air cages surrounded by ditches and swamps.

An eyewitness investigation by PETA at the notorious Primate Products Inc. not only documented workers violently handling terrified monkeys, but also showed improper drainage and standing water. Zika cases in humans have already been identified in several neighboring counties, and it's just a matter of time until the virus hits the jackpot- thousands of stressed, caged monkeys who cannot escape hungry mosquitoes.

I found Florida to be rich in wildlife and natural beauty. It is a shame to know that these feeling, intelligent monkeys are being warehoused and abused there, and worse yet, these monkey prisons are the perfect breeding ground for the Zika virus to hide out and multiply undetected.

Dr. Philip, I hope that the Florida Surgeon General's office finds that confining stressed monkeys in crowded, decrepit conditions in the midst of a Zika outbreak poses a threat to human health. Please protect the public and the animals by working to close these monkey warehouses down for good.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edie Falco', with a stylized, cursive script.

Edie Falco