

The Jackson Laboratory: A History of Serious and Repeat Violations of Federal Animal Welfare Guidelines

Federal documents, dating from November 2006 to December 2016, obtained by PETA from the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) reveal numerous incidents in which mice at The Jackson Laboratory (Jackson) endured pain and distress because of worker incompetence and neglect. On multiple occasions, mice died of dehydration when employees failed to notice empty water bottles. Others suffocated when they were left in airtight jars or transport cages wrapped in plastic then forgotten. A mouse who was being restrained while blood was drawn died from mishandling. On many occasions, live mice were discovered inside bags or freezers intended for dead animals because workers had failed to ensure that they were dead after they had been gassed. And numerous times, experimenters deviated from approved protocols, potentially subjecting the mice to even more pain and distress.

- **December 2016 (Sacramento, California):** Mice in several rooms suffocated to death when the power failed and ventilation to their cages was compromised.
- **May 2016 (Sacramento, California):** After a fluctuation in room pressure caused water bottles to leak into animals' cages, 40 mice had to be euthanized because of their resulting poor condition.
- **April 2016 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** An undisclosed number of mice being transported in 190 shipping boxes died because of a temperature malfunction in a delivery truck. The cause of the malfunction wasn't determined.
- **February 2016 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Seven mice were found dead and an additional undisclosed number of mice were euthanized after Jackson personnel failed to provide them with sufficient food and water.
- **September 2015 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** An undisclosed number of mice died and additional ones were euthanized after a sprinkler head sprayed water on several racks containing 640 cages of mice for approximately five minutes before it was turned off.
- **July 2015 (Sacramento, California):** A Jackson experimenter began conducting experiments on mice without approval from the facility's oversight body.
- **May 2015 (Sacramento, California):** An undisclosed number of mice were found dead in their cages after Jackson personnel failed to euthanize them as stipulated in the approved protocol.
- **February 2015 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Nine anesthetized mice died after they were placed on a heating source prior to surgery. The equipment malfunctioned, causing them to die from heat stress.
- **December 2014 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Several live mice were found in a carcass-disposal bag after Jackson personnel failed to verify death following a euthanasia procedure.
- **October 2014 (Sacramento, California):** An undisclosed number of mice were observed to have tumors that had become ulcerated after Jackson personnel failed to euthanize them as stipulated in the approved protocol.
- **March 2014 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** In two separate incidents, an undisclosed number of mouse pups died after Jackson personnel failed to provide them with sufficient food and water following weaning.

- **January 2014 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Mice who were being transported were left unattended for several hours in a cage that was double-bagged in plastic. By the time they were discovered, several had died, and the survivors had to be euthanized.
- **November 2013 (Sacramento, California):** Mice died because they did not have a water bottle. Workers had failed to notice its absence during daily checks. Jackson didn't report the number of mice who had died, and federal authorities didn't request the information.
- **November 2013 (Sacramento, California):** An undisclosed number of mice baked to death when the electrical system malfunctioned and personnel ignored the malfunction alarm. In his report to federal authorities, Jackson's executive vice president downplayed the mice's suffering, writing, "[A] small percentage of the population of mice in several animal rooms at The Jackson Laboratory's Sacramento campus succumbed due to a buildup of heat and carbon dioxide." As Jackson's Sacramento facility holds an approximate "daily inventory" of 216,000 mice, a "small percentage" could still be a large number of mice, whose agonizing deaths likely involved extreme respiratory distress, nausea, weakness, and multiple-organ failure. Federal authorities did not request a clarification on the number.
- **March 2013 (Sacramento, California):** A Jackson experimenter deviated from the protocol that had been approved by the facility's oversight body for a study, using mice who were 2 to 3 weeks older than the ages that had been approved. Such deviations can potentially increase the animals' pain and discomfort.
- **January 2013 (Sacramento, California):** A mouse died of dehydration when workers failed to notice that the water bottle in the cage was empty.
- **January 2013 (Sacramento, California):** A mouse died as a result of being improperly restrained while having blood drawn from a cheek.
- **October 2012 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Eight 4-day-old live mice were left in a tub overnight in a laboratory in which they were scheduled to be killed and then necropsied. The individual responsible for the necropsy had forgotten about them. As a result, three died and five had to be euthanized.
- **August 2012 (Sacramento, California):** Two incidents occurred in which experiments on mice were carried out without first securing approval from the laboratory's oversight body, which may have jeopardized their well-being since the oversight body is responsible for ensuring that animals' pain and discomfort are minimized.
- **August 2012 (Sacramento, California):** Because of a shipping error, two mice were left in their cage without food or water. When they were discovered, one was dead and the other had become dehydrated.
- **July 2012 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** A live mouse was found inside a "cull bag" (a bag intended for dead mice).
- **March 2012 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Twenty-four live mice who were 3 days old or younger were discovered inside a cull bag, which also contained two dead mother mice with live fetuses.
- **March 2010 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Two 10-day-old live mice were found inside a bag of dead mice who had been gassed with carbon dioxide.
- **October 2009 (Sacramento, California):** Fifteen live mice were discovered inside a carcass bin in a freezer—they had been there for three days. The incident was the result of a failed attempt at carbon dioxide gassing. Bags containing carcasses of dead mice had been chewed through and the carcasses cannibalized.

- **April 2009 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** A total of 366 mice were found dead in their cages after an HVAC disruption resulted in a complete loss of ventilation to the individually ventilated cages in the room. Their deaths were a result of a buildup of heat and carbon dioxide and the depletion of oxygen in their cages.
- **March 2009 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** A live mouse was discovered inside a bag of dead mice who had been gassed with carbon dioxide.
- **December 2008 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Three mice suffocated when they were left in airtight jars overnight. An additional mouse in the jar had to be euthanized.
- **June 2008 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** A licensed veterinary technologist at Jackson reported a litany of animal welfare concerns to OLAW. In her reports, which included internal documents and e-mails sent to senior Jackson officials, she described instances of many moribund mice—unable to move, "showing significant signs of debilitation," unable to reach food and water, and close to death. Some of them, genetically modified for use in ALS studies, had become paralyzed and very sick, exhibiting a "hunched" appearance, "cold to the touch, not moving, acutely dehydrated, emaciated, [and with] sunken eyes." According to the documents, an animal health technician had reported concerns related to the ALS mice "at least 20 times over the years," but nothing was done to alleviate their suffering. The veterinary technologist contacted OLAW when her attempts to have the issues resolved internally were unsuccessful. OLAW corresponded with Jackson officials, and they assured the office that they had updated their policies and forms. In December 2008, OLAW wrote the following to Jackson:

OLAW appreciates the efforts by you and The Jackson Laboratory [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee] to investigate the original allegations and to provide the requested information. OLAW believes that the implementation of these policies and updated forms will mitigate concerns relating to endpoints and clinical intervention. We thank you again for your attention to this matter and find no cause for further action by this office.

- **April 2008 (Sacramento, California):** Eighty mice suffocated when they were left in airtight jars overnight.
- **April 2008 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Several live mice were found in a bag that also contained dead ones.
- **March 2008 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Two live mice were found in a cooler intended for dead animals.
- **December 2007 (Bar Harbor, Maine):** Eight mice died of starvation and dehydration when they were left in a cage and forgotten. They had been there without food or water for seven days before their bodies were discovered.
- **November 2006 (Sacramento, California):** When a Jackson experimenter carried out experiments on mice without approval from the facility's oversight body, nine mice sustained injuries to their eyes and had to be euthanized.