



January 24, 2022

Robert M. Gibbens, DVM  
 Director, Animal Welfare Operations  
 USDA, APHIS, Animal Care  
 2150 Centre Avenue, Bldg. B  
 Ft. Collins, CO 80526

Via e-mail: [Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov](mailto:Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov)

Dear Dr. Gibbens:

I hope this correspondence finds you well. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally—to respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) promptly investigate a [vehicular accident](#) in which a pickup truck, pulling a trailer transporting 100 long-tailed macaques collided with a dump truck. The crash occurred this past Friday at around 3:30 pm, along state Route 54 just off Interstate 80 near Danville, Pennsylvania. PETA has received information from inside sources and has tracked media reports on the story, and we believe the handling and treatment of monkeys before, during, and after the collision may constitute violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs).

According to insider reports, the monkeys involved in Friday's crash had, just that morning, arrived at Kennedy Airport (JFK) in Queens, New York, after being transported in the cargo hold of a Kenya Airways flight from Mauritius—a flight that takes a minimum of 19 hours. At JFK, the monkeys—who were imported to be sent eventually to experimentation facilities—were loaded onto a pickup truck reportedly operated by the Arnaudville, Louisiana-based company Quebedeaux's Transport, LLC (Quebedeaux; USDA Certificate No. 72-T-0012), to be driven to a facility in Missouri. We believe this may have been Central State Primates (USDA Certificate No. 43-H-0056) in Montreal, Missouri. The drive from JFK to Montreal, Missouri takes longer than 17 hours.

As has been widely reported in the media, late Friday afternoon, the pickup truck was headed west on I-80 when it got off at the Danville exit, only to immediately try to get back on the interstate, driving across the other lane. The pickup truck was "[hit on the passenger side by the dump truck, tearing off the front panel of the trailer.](#)" More than a dozen wooden crates confining the live monkeys were scattered across Route 54. [Photos from the scene of the accident](#) show crates strewn across the highway. Several of the crates appear to have sustained significant damage from the crash, and crates confining three or four monkeys<sup>1</sup> were sufficiently damaged that these monkeys escaped and fled the scene.

<sup>1</sup>Initial reports indicated that four monkeys had escaped, but later reports suggest that three monkeys had escaped.

PEOPLE FOR  
 THE ETHICAL  
 TREATMENT  
 OF ANIMALS

Washington  
 1536 16th St. N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20036  
 202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
 2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
 Los Angeles, CA 90026  
 323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
 501 Front St.  
 Norfolk, VA 23510  
 757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org  
 PETA.org

Entities:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

[One motorist](#) who stopped at the accident site reported lifting up the green material covering on one of the cages and putting her fingers into one of the crates—believing the crates held cats—only to see a monkey looking back at her. According to a media report, “[troopers searched for \[the escaped\] monkeys, rifles in hand.](#)” The search for the monkeys continued into the evening hours, even as temperatures in the area plummeted to below freezing. We can hear a shot being fired in a [video that was posted onto Twitter](#) by a reporter—although the report indicates that “troopers did not comment on the nature of the weapon used or how many monkeys were captured or injured.” On Saturday morning, [one monkey was still unaccounted for.](#) But [by Saturday night](#), all monkeys had reportedly been accounted for, and the three escaped monkeys had been killed. It was initially reported by media that four monkeys had escaped, and then later that three had been found and one was still loose. It’s not clear why there was a discrepancy in the reports.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the section of Route 54 where the collision occurred was [closed for about three hours](#) to clear the road. However, there is no indication that the 96 or 97 monkeys who remained confined received immediate medical evaluation or care. It is also unclear how long the monkeys were forced to stay outside in the sub-freezing temperatures while another vehicle was secured for the monkeys to be reloaded into a temperature-controlled environment.

It appears to us that the handling and treatment of monkeys before, during, and after the collision violates several AWRs, including the following:

1. Section 3.87(a)(1) of the AWRs states: “Primary enclosures used to transport nonhuman primates ... must be constructed so that ... [t]he primary enclosure is strong enough to contain the nonhuman primate securely and comfortably and to withstand the normal rigors of transportation.” However, photographs of the crash site shared by the media reveal that the crates that had fallen out of the trailer did not have on them hooks that are used to strap down the crates, holding them in place. Had such hooks and straps been used, the crates would not have been thrown out of the trailer.
2. Section 3.86(e) of the AWRs states: “Carriers and intermediate handlers must not accept a nonhuman primate for transport in commerce unless their animal holding area facilities meet the minimum temperature requirements,” that temperatures must not fall below 45°F. However, the monkeys who escaped the wooden crates were exposed to temperatures well below the stipulated minimum temperature permitted, for many hours—and one suffered the bitter cold temperatures of rural Pennsylvania for 28 hours. With the front panel of the trailer torn off, *all* of the monkeys would have had to endure temperatures below the stipulated minimum for multiple hours before a replacement trailer was secured into which the surviving monkeys could be placed.
3. Sections 3.86 – 3.92 of the AWRs provide regulations that stipulate appropriate standards for the commercial transportation of nonhuman primates, including provisions for ensuring that primates are not held for more than four hours before departing a station; that primates receive appropriate food and water for the journey; that primates do not suffer injuries while being transported; that primates who are obviously ill, injured, or in physical discomfort “must not be transported in commerce, except to receive veterinary care for the condition”; and that primates have appropriate access to ventilation while being transported. However, these standards were not met for the monkeys who were involved in Friday’s accident. Monkeys, who had just experienced the trauma of a violent

collision, were left stranded on the highway, exposed to the elements. Witnesses reported that some of the monkeys seemed scared and others were making sounds. Given the force of the collision, the damage sustained by the trailer and the injuries to the passenger which required that he be transported, by emergency vehicle, for medical care, it is almost certain that monkeys were injured. However, there is no indication that they were promptly evaluated or provided with veterinary care. And when the crates in which the monkeys were held were ejected out of the trailer, some of the crates landed in such a way that ventilation openings would have become blocked, hampering airflow to the monkeys.

4. The AWA defines “euthanasia” as “the humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method that produces rapid unconsciousness and subsequent death without evidence of pain or distress, or a method that utilizes anesthesia produced by an agent that causes painless loss of consciousness and subsequent death.” While state troopers and other authorities on the ground in Pennsylvania have been silent on the methods used to kill the three monkeys who, terrorized and traumatized, fled the scene of the collision, the video posted by a media outlet (and referenced earlier) suggests that the monkeys were killed with live bullets. However, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accepts gunshot as a humane method of killing *only* when the gunshot is “properly placed [to] cause immediate insensibility and a humane death.” It is not at all clear that this is how the three escaped monkeys were killed.

We recognize that the provisions of the AWA do not extend to the health and safety of humans who interact with animals destined for experimentation. However, it’s worth noting that after the collision occurred and crates holding imported monkeys who had not yet been quarantined were strewn on a highway, no effort was made to discourage passing motorists—who did not have the benefit of personal protective equipment—from attempting to peer into the crates or touch the monkeys. These monkeys had just arrived from Mauritius the same day. They had not been quarantined, their health had not been assessed, and no one knows what pathogens they harbored.

There was also a risk to the larger public as the escaped monkeys may have been harboring infectious agents that are transmissible to humans<sup>2</sup>. State veterinary and other records show that even monkeys in U.S. laboratories **who have undergone a CDC quarantine** have been found with tuberculosis, Chagas disease, cholera, shigella, salmonella, campylobacter, *Macacine herpesvirus 1* (Herpes B), and Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). According to a 2017 study<sup>3</sup> assessing the risk of infectious disease introduction into human communities: “Approximately one-quarter of human deaths caused by infectious disease and nearly 60% of infectious diseases are considered zoonotic (pathogens transmissible between animals and humans) [and] most of these (>70%) are caused by pathogens of wildlife origin.” The study continues: “[M]odern transportation allows emerging diseases to spread along various globally connected networks in a manner of days.”

---

<sup>2</sup>Bringing a Nonhuman Primate into the United States. Since 1975, the Federal Quarantine Regulations (42 CFR 71.53) have restricted the importation of NHPs. CDC’s Division of Global Migration and Quarantine carries out these regulations. These regulations are in place to protect U.S. residents from severe infections that can spread from monkeys to humans. [Monkeys | Bringing an Animal into U.S. | Importation | CDC](#)

<sup>3</sup>Smith, K. M., Zambrana-Torrel, C., White, A., Asmussen, M., Machalaba, C., Kennedy, S., ... & Karesh, W. B. (2017). Summarizing US wildlife trade with an eye toward assessing the risk of infectious disease introduction. *EcoHealth*, 14(1), 29-39.

While the horrific collision near Danville, Pennsylvania represents the terrifying and violent deaths of three intelligent, sentient animals; and the pain and trauma inflicted on another 97, the very real and serious health and safety risks to the public should not be overlooked.

We urge you to investigate the issues summarized in this letter and to take swift action to ensure that any parties responsible for the pain and distress suffered by the 100 monkeys involved in Friday's collision are held accountable to the maximum extent permitted by law.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [AlkaC@peta.org](mailto:AlkaC@peta.org) or (757) 803-6447. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alka Chandna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alka Chandna, Ph.D.  
Vice President  
Laboratory Investigations Cases

CC: The Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor, Pennsylvania



January 24, 2022

Robert M. Gibbens, DVM  
Director, Animal Welfare Operations  
USDA, APHIS, Animal Care  
2150 Centre Avenue, Bldg. B  
Ft. Collins, CO 80526

Via e-mail: [Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov](mailto:Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov)

Dear Dr. Gibbens,

Further to the complaint that I submitted to your office earlier today regarding Friday's vehicular accident near Danville, Pennsylvania, in which a truck transporting 100 long-tailed macaques collided with a dump truck, resulting in wooden crates holding the monkeys to become strewn along the highway and three or four monkeys to escape, I am submitting this addendum. Pennsylvania resident Ms. Michele Fallon witnessed the collision, and had stopped to assist. As described in my initial complaint, Ms. Fallon had peered into one of the crates—believing it held cats—only to realize that the crates held monkeys. She has attested to the following facts:

1. When Ms. Fallon had peered into one of the monkey crates, saliva from the confined monkey shot into her eye, which is now red and weepy. Ms. Fallon also became scratched; and she walked through monkey feces. She is presently on antivirals and started on a rabies prophylaxis regimen. At 11:30 pm on Friday, CDC officials at the site of the accident asked Ms. Fallon to return to the scene and describe her exposures. However, it is unclear whether any of the monkeys at the accident site had specimens/cultures collected to test for zoonotic viruses or other pathogens.
2. A handful of people who had stopped at the scene of the accident had direct contact with the crates. In fact, multiple people had contact with the crates before the driver of the pickup truck informed them that the animals in the crates were monkeys destined for laboratories who had not yet been quarantined.
3. Monkey urine and feces were splattered across the highway and beyond.
4. The cages were not strapped down.
5. No heat source was provided to the monkeys while they remained crated on the road for hours while issues with the accident were being sorted.
6. Ms. Fallon believes the accident occurred because the passenger in the pickup truck (that was hauling the trailer of monkeys) was napping in the back seat and both windows on the passenger side were completely blocked with shades.
7. The driver was in a state of panic and was desperately trying to keep images of the accident from getting out.

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

Washington  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org  
PETA.org

Entities:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

I hope these details are helpful to your office. Ms. Fallon has indicated that she would be happy to speak with you or anyone in your office. She can be reached at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alka Chandna". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Alka Chandna, Ph.D.  
Vice President  
Laboratory Investigations Cases