



March 30, 2022

Joe Chrisman
Wisconsin State Auditor
Legislative Audit Bureau

Via e-mail: Joe.Chrisman@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Mr. Chrisman:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—to share some troubling information we have obtained about the University of Wisconsin—Madison's performance regarding the apparent waste of state resources allocated to animal research activities.

Based on the information presented below that we obtained through the Wisconsin Public Records Law, we ask that your office audit UW-Madison and investigate the apparent fiscal waste of taxpayer money in crude animal experimentation, specifically by doing the following:

1. Seeking reimbursement of any and all state funds used to acquire, breed, confine, maintain, repopulate, and/or experiment on animals used in laboratories whom UW-Madison categorized as unnecessary, extraneous, noncritical, nonessential, ramped down, disposable, or nonpriority and/or described using similar terminology and euthanized in response to COVID-19
2. Ensuring that current state-funded research activities involving such animals are permanently terminated, that new state-funded research activities that include such animals are not approved, and that the breeding and acquisition of such animals for state-funded research activities are prohibited

Euthanizing Animals Deemed Extraneous in UW-Madison Labs Wastes Taxpayer Funds

In 2020, UW-Madison received \$529 million in state support,¹ part of which may have been used to support animal experimentation activities, vis-à-vis experimenters' salaries, laboratory space, animal and testing equipment procurement, and so forth. UW-Madison

¹University of Wisconsin—Madison. Budget in Brief. Budget Report 2020–2021. Accessed March 11, 2022. https://budget.wisc.edu/content/uploads/Budget-in-Brief_2020-21_Web.pdf

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experimenter Laura J. Knoll conducts the National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded protocol titled “Sexual Development of Toxoplasma in Feline Intestinal Organoids” (NIH project numbers 5R01AI144016-02, 5R01AI144016-03, and 5R01AI144016-04), which has received \$1,524,195 from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases during fiscal years 2019- 2022.² Public records confirm that animals on this protocol were deemed by UW-Madison and/or Knoll nonessential and killed in response to the university’s COVID-19 response plan,³ which states that “[a]ll on-site research activities must be approved by a dean or director, who are directed to only approve essential research, based on their judgement,” and that “[r]esearchers should consider reduction or cessation of non-critical animal breeding, including agricultural animals and USDA-covered species.”⁴

This protocol apparently wasted taxpayer funds by involving the euthanasia of these animals, and such activities occurred in a laboratory that also likely involves the use of Wisconsin state money, personnel, property, equipment, and space by UW-Madison. The fact that laboratories at the school had animals it deemed unnecessary, extraneous, noncritical, nonessential, or something similar in the first place should raise significant red flags, especially since the experiments are funded and/or supported by taxpayers, who should not have to foot the bill for such wasteful experiments or for obtaining more animals.

UW-Madison’s Protocols Failed to Reduce and Replace Animal Use

The presence of these animals in UW-Madison’s laboratories flies in the face of existing regulations designed to minimize the use of animals in experiments. Government policy language requiring the minimization of the experimental use of animals is present in the Health Research Extension Act of 1985, the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993, the eighth edition of the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, and the U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training:

- The Health Research Extension Act of 1985 states, “The Director of NIH shall require each applicant for a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement involving research on animals ... to include in its application or contract proposal ... assurances satisfactory to the Director of NIH that ... scientists, animal technicians, and other personnel involved with animal care, treatment, and use by the applicant have available to them instruction or training in the ... use of *research or testing methods that limit the use of animals* or limit animal distress”⁵ [*emphasis added*].

²National Institutes of Health. RePORTER. Sexual Development of Toxoplasma in Feline Intestinal Organoids. Accessed March 10, 2022. <https://reporter.nih.gov/search/hZZvR14-7UWc8-IrJu7SFQ/projects>

³University of Wisconsin-Madison. Kaylie Flaugh People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Public Records Request :: P001886-092321. October 7, 2021. Accessed March 11, 2022. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/uw-madison-responsive-records-response-letter.pdf>

⁴University of Wisconsin–Madison. Campus Research Activities Update. March 19, 2020. Accessed March 11, 2022. <https://news.wisc.edu/campus-research-activities-update/>.

⁵NIH, Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare. Health Research Extension Act of 1985, Publ. L. No. 99-158. November 20, 1985. Accessed March 11, 2022. <https://olaw.nih.gov/policies-laws/hrea-1985.htm>

- The NIH Revitalization Act of 1993 states, “The Director of NIH ... shall prepare a plan ... for the National Institutes of Health to conduct or support research into ... *methods of such research and experimentation that reduce the number of animals used in such research*”⁶ [emphasis added].
- The eighth edition of the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* states, “The *Guide* ... endorses the following principles: *consideration of alternatives (in vitro systems, computer simulations, and/or mathematical models) to reduce or replace the use of animals*”⁷ [emphasis added].
- The U.S. Government Principles for the Utilization and Care of Vertebrate Animals Used in Testing, Research, and Training (1985) states, “The animals selected for a procedure should be of an appropriate species and quality and *the minimum number required to obtain valid results*”⁸ [emphasis added].

When UW-Madison’s experimenters buy, breed, trap, and/or use animals who at any time—not just during the COVID-19 pandemic—can be deemed unnecessary, nonessential, noncritical, or extraneous or described using similar terminology, they squander limited research funds, some of which are likely provided by Wisconsin taxpayers, and flout the bedrock “3Rs” principle of reducing, replacing, and refining the use of animals in experimentation enshrined in government regulations and policies.

Under this standard, the number of animals deemed unnecessary, nonessential, noncritical, or extraneous who were used in experiments should have been zero from the start. In addition, since state taxpayer funds were likely used to acquire, breed, confine, and/or maintain these animals, who were then so readily euthanized and disposed of in response to COVID-19, UW-Madison should reimburse the state of Wisconsin for this fiscal waste.

Furthermore, the Congressional Research Service found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, “Suspending research may result in additional costs for activities such as animal care” and “[r]estarting research, when conditions permit, may also incur costs for staff time and supplies to ... reestablish laboratory animal populations.”⁹ Wisconsin taxpayers should not be responsible for any of the additional costs associated with “reestablishing laboratory animal populations,” since UW-Madison deemed many of them to be unnecessary, nonessential, noncritical, or extraneous to the experiments and

⁶NIH Revitalization Act of 1993, Publ. L. No. 103-43. June 10, 1993. Accessed March 11, 2022.

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/p1103-43.pdf>

⁷National Research Council. Committee for the Update of the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. 8th ed. The National Academies Press; 2011. Accessed March 11, 2022. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/guide-for-the-care-and-use-of-laboratory-animals.pdf>

⁸National Research Council, Committee for the Update of the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*. Appendix B: U.S. government principles for the utilization and care of vertebrate animals used in testing, research, and training. 2011. Accessed March 11, 2022.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK54048/>

⁹Congressional Research Service. Effects of COVID-19 on the Federal Research and Development Enterprise. April 10, 2020. Accessed March 11, 2022.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46309>

because repopulating animals in laboratories at taxpayers' expense would appear to violate the aforementioned federal regulations and policies that mandate minimizing the use of animals in experiments.

Request for Research Accountability

This information seems to corroborate the apparent waste of state funds by UW-Madison on activities supporting experiments and/or on the animals used in them. Such seeming waste of precious resources by the school does a disservice to the research enterprise, Wisconsin taxpayers, and the animals who lost their lives.

We urge you to audit UW-Madison's actions in this matter and, if you corroborate the issues we have raised, hold the university accountable by requiring it to reimburse the state of Wisconsin for apparent fiscal waste of state taxpayer funds with respect to the university's animal experiments and by ensuring that current state-funded research activities involving animals are permanently terminated, that new state-funded research activities including animals are not approved, and that the breeding and acquisition of animals for state-funded research activities are prohibited.

You can contact me at ShriyaS@peta.org. I look forward to your reply regarding this important matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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