



July 8, 2022

Robert M. Gibbens, D.V.M.
Director, Animal Welfare Operations
USDA/APHIS/Animal Care

Via e-mail: Robert.M.Gibbens@usda.gov

Dear Dr. Gibbens:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 9 million members and supporters globally to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) investigate possible violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the associated Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs), related to the use and treatment of hamsters at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass; USDA Certificate No. 14-R-0036).

According to records obtained by PETA through the Freedom of Information Act, on March 18, 2022, UMass reported a non-compliance with Public Health Service Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy) to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW). In particular, UMass informed OLAW that an experimenter had obtained permission from the university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to raise Syrian Hamsters in constant darkness for 100 days; however, this experimenter had exceeded the approved time period "by 2x or more," without securing approval from the IACUC for this significant change to the protocol.

It seems to us that this deviation from the IACUC-approved protocol is also a violation of Section 2.31(c)(6) of the AWRs, which stipulates that the IACUC shall "[r]eview and approve ... proposed activities related to the care and use of animals." We believe the experimenter's deviation from the IACUC-approved protocol constitutes a violation of Section 2.31(c)(6)—and we urge you to investigate the matter and take swift and decisive action, including citing UMass for violating the AWA.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. You can contact me at AlkaC@peta.org, or 757-803-6447.

Sincerely,

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

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