



June 14, 2023

Brent C. Morse, D.V.M.  
Director  
Division of Compliance Oversight  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
National Institutes of Health

Via e-mail: [MorseB@mail.nih.gov](mailto:MorseB@mail.nih.gov)

Dear Dr. Morse:

We believe that the federal Animal Welfare Act violation documented in a [recently posted U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) inspection report](#) for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst (UMass-Amherst; Animal Welfare Assurance D16-00337) constitutes a violation of the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy). In particular, the USDA report documents that a UMass-Amherst experimenter subjected hamsters to tissue ablation—a procedure that would cause more than momentary pain and distress to the animals—but failed to conduct a search for alternatives. For its part, the university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) failed to ensure that the experimenter had conducted a search for alternatives, as is required by law.

We ask that your office investigate the incident outlined in this report. This particular laboratory has previously run afoul of federal animal welfare standards. Last year, UMass-Amherst reported that [experimenters held 10 golden hamsters in constant darkness for more than 200 days, twice the duration approved by the IACUC](#). The [USDA report](#) documenting this incident also cited UMass-Amherst for failing to separate hamster pups from their mother in a timely fashion—leading to significant overcrowding in the enclosure. The mother and her 19 35-day-old infants were crowded into an enclosure with a floor area of two square feet and forced to step across bedding saturated with their own waste.

Last year, UMass-Amherst received \$39,491,245 from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and according to NIH, an estimated 47% of those funds supported projects that involved experiments on animals.

In 1985, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle worked together to strengthen protections for animals in laboratories in order to address deep-seated ethical concerns held by the American public regarding the use of animals in experiments. Polling by the Pew Research Center found that more than 50% of U.S. adults oppose the use of animals in experiments, and other surveys suggest that the support of the shrinking group that continues to accept animal experimentation is contingent on the existence and enforcement of stringent regulations aimed at protecting animals.

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](mailto:Info@peta.org)  
[PETA.org](http://PETA.org)


Entities:

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

As you know, institutions that receive funding from Public Health Service agencies—including NIH—are required to comply with PHS Policy. Failure to comply violates not only federal animal welfare guidelines and policies but also public expectations that facilities receiving tax dollars to use animals—who are capable of experiencing pain, distress, love, and companionship and value their lives just as we value ours—at the very least, comply with minimal standards aimed at ensuring some modicum of animal welfare.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alka Chandna".

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