



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

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April 7, 2017

Ingrid Taylor, DVM  
Research Associate  
People for Ethical Treatment of Animals  
501 Front Street  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510

*Via e-mail: [drtaylor@peta.org](mailto:drtaylor@peta.org)*

Dear Dr. Taylor,

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) has completed its investigation into the anonymous whistleblower allegations of noncompliance with the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals at the Jackson Laboratory which you submitted on behalf of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals on March 2, 2017. Based on the information obtained from 29 technicians and supervisors queried about the allegations, the following findings were made:

- 1) The allegation regarding insufficient animal caretaker staffing resulting in inadequate animal care and documentation could not be substantiated. The current workload was reportedly increasing which has resulted in delay of some non-animal tasks. Overtime is available to allow completion of tasks and staffing levels are under review by the institution.
- 2) The allegation that a technician was inappropriately trained to perform tail snips and that the supervisor was aware but did not intervene, could not be substantiated. A supervisor did identify a technician performing tail snips improperly and immediately stopped the person from performing additional procedures until retraining was completed. There were no adverse effects on the mice due to this action. All employees are given extensive training before being allowed to work with animals.

The allegation that mice were dropped into cages from a high position was not substantiated. Staff is trained to place mice into cages with two feet on the floor and this is how it is done.

Regarding wet cages due to leaking water bottles, when this occurs the mice are moved to dry cages or euthanized. The supervisor is informed and the incident is recorded in the electronic tracking system. Use of an improved water bottle cap is being implemented to reduce leaks.

The allegation that a technician attempted to pick up a mouse by using the sides of his shoes and tossing it up could not be substantiated.

- 3) The allegation that technicians do not report sick mice due to lack of food and water could not be substantiated. Cages identified with insufficient food or water are cared for, the supervisor is informed, and the incident is recorded in the electronic tracking system.

The allegation that an Associate Director hid a wet cage from AAALAC site visitors could not be substantiated. This was based on interviews with employees present with the site visitors and Associate Director.

The allegation that individuals stating an interest in complying with humane laws are not hired could not be substantiated. A thorough interview process is in place to ensure that only individuals with a sincere interest in animal welfare are hired.

Regarding reporting of animal concerns, staff is knowledgeable how to report and no one is reprimanded for doing so. Signs describing the reporting process are posted in the animal rooms.

Regarding overcrowding of mouse cages destined for euthanasia, this does not usually occur. However, there was a recent incident of this and the individual responsible was terminated. Staff is trained on appropriate cage densities and corrective action is taken when allowable densities are exceeded.

- 4) Regarding husbandry and fighting, mice are housed in densities optimal for the strain and cages are changed at weekly or biweekly intervals. Any cages with wet or dirty bedding are changed when identified. All cages are checked daily and technicians are rotated so that more than one individual is viewing the same cages. Health checks are documented and supervisors verify the records.

The individual who performed the inappropriate tail tipping and overcrowded the euthanasia cage also did not perform the cage checks correctly for several days and was therefore terminated as stated above. The other two individuals involved with improper cage checks were disciplined and retrained and the matter was reported to OLAW.

- 5) Regarding maintenance of confidentiality, this is not required of supervisors who observe individuals performing procedures incorrectly. Confidentiality is only protected for individuals reporting animal welfare concerns.

Based on its assessment of this information OLAW determined that the allegations were not substantiated as stated. In a few situations, problems had been identified and were appropriately and promptly addressed. Overall the Jackson Laboratory encourages a culture of compliance, seeks to enhance animal welfare, and promptly reports noncompliance to OLAW along with corrective and preventive measures. OLAW finds the Jackson Laboratory compliant with the provisions of the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and has closed the investigation. Thank you for your interest in animal welfare.

Sincerely,



Axel Wolff, M.S., D.V.M.  
Director  
Division of Compliance Oversight