



December 8, 2023

Daniel B. Jernigan, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director  
National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Via e-mail: [dbj0@cdc.gov](mailto:dbj0@cdc.gov)

Dear Dr. Jernigan:

This week, CDC scientists presented data showing that monkeys imported from Southeast Asia for use in experimentation had arrived infected with a deadly pathogen transmissible to humans: an [unusual strain of mycobacteria](#) that causes tuberculosis (TB). Monkeys brought into this country for the study of disease are actually bringing deadly diseases that can sicken and kill humans with them.

According to CDC scientists, between 2010 and 2020 there were no confirmed cases of TB detected among imported monkeys during the mandated 31-day quarantine period. But from 2021 to 2023, there was a shocking increase in shipments with confirmed TB cases among monkeys. In January 2023, 26 long-tailed macaques imported from Southeast Asia were found to be infected with *Mycobacterium orygis*, a strain of TB that had **never before been seen in animals in the U.S.** Documents we have obtained indicate that this shipment was likely one containing 540 monkeys who originated from the Thanh Cong Biological Creature Co. Ltd. facility in Vietnam and were imported into Houston by Charles River Laboratories.

The importation of TB that [can infect humans, cows, and other animals](#) follows the importation of another deadly pathogen. A year ago, I wrote to you asking, in light of the [consistent failure by the CDC importation quarantine](#) to detect monkeys who originate from Southeast Asia infected with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, that you suspend all monkey importation. Your own scientists and primate importers publicly acknowledged that animals [entered and exited CDC quarantine harboring this deadly Tier 1 Select Agent](#), transmissible to—and often fatal in—humans. It had infected the monkeys in their home countries. The CDC was aware that the tests used to detect the presence of this pathogen were inadequate and that the infection manifested in ways that [made detection very challenging](#). Despite this obvious risk to public health, your agency continued in the second half of fiscal year 2023 to allow thousands of primates to be imported from Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and, briefly, Cambodia.

Now a strain of TB that previously had been confined to Asia, as well as a pathogen that could be used as a weapon of terrorism, has reached our shores. And given the [CDC's continued use of the archaic, insensitive, and nonspecific tuberculin skin test](#), even more monkeys may be flown to the U.S. who were exposed to or infected with tuberculosis.

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The CDC's monkey importation and quarantines aren't protecting U.S. citizens. Monkeys taken from their forest home in Mauritius entered the U.S. and were quarantined under CDC rules—and then exited CDC quarantine infected with TB. These animals were transported across the country and ultimately triggered [a reportable disease outbreak in Michigan](#) this year after laboratory workers were exposed to infected animals.

Whether the unprecedented number of monkeys arriving in the U.S. infected with strains of tuberculosis, *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, malaria, clinical signs consistent with filovirus infection, or deadly gut bacteria is a reflection of wild-caught monkeys being smuggled into the importation pipeline or the CDC's reliance on outdated ineffectual tests to detect dangerous pathogens, the result is the same: Our nation is at risk.

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we once again ask the CDC to suspend all importation of monkeys for use in the experimentation industry. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LJE', is positioned above the typed name.

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