



January 11, 2024

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

Dear Dr. Morse:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally—to request that your office investigate possible noncompliance with the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy) and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (the Guide) related to the treatment of animals at the University of California - Davis (UC Davis; Animal Welfare Assurance ID D16-00272).

According to a December 6, 2023, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection report for UC Davis, a lamb died after getting their head and neck caught in a pen. The lamb was one of a litter of four who were born small in size on September 13 around 2pm. The ewe's maternal instincts were reportedly "not strong," so the staff made a smaller enclosed area using the existing catch pen to attempt to aid in maternal bonding with the lambs. The staff then monitored the lambs from 3:30-5:30pm. At around 6pm, the staff returned to check on the lambs and discovered that one of the lambs had caught their head and neck "between the vertical metal bar and wall plate nearest the lower wall hinge on the catch pen." The lamb was unresponsive, and CPR was not successful.

The issue raised in the USDA's inspection report for UC Davis—failure to keep housing facilities in good repair and protect animals from injury—also indicates noncompliance with PHS Policy and the Guide.

The Guide states,

The primary enclosure should provide a secure environment that does not permit animal escape and should be made of durable, nontoxic materials that resist corrosion, withstand the rigors of cleaning and regular handling, and are not detrimental to the health and research use of the animals. The enclosure should be designed and manufactured to prevent accidental entrapment of animals or their appendages. ... All enclosures should be kept in good repair to prevent escape of or injury to the animals, promote physical comfort, and facilitate sanitation and servicing (p. 51).

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UC Davis clearly did not set up an enclosure that prevented the entrapment of animals or their appendages, as the lamb got their head and neck caught in the pen and died.

In FY 2023 alone, the National Institutes of Health awarded UC Davis with nearly \$280 million. Such funding should be able to ensure that enclosures are constructed so as to not allow an animal to get caught and die in one, but UC Davis has proven that it cannot meet even basic animal welfare requirements regardless of what resources it has.

We urge you to investigate the concerns summarized in this letter and to take swift and decisive action against UC Davis. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Schemkes', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Schemkes, J.D., M.S.
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PETA