

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

July 9, 2025

Deborah Schenk
Executive Director
New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine

Via email: Deborah.schenk@bvm.nm.gov

Dear Ms. Schenk and Members of the New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine,

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide, including 36,433 in New Mexico—to bring to your attention a deeply troubling incident involving a clinical staff veterinarian at Lovelace Biomedical Research Institute, as documented in a recent [inspection report](#) posted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

On January 28, 2025, during a hands-on training session for veterinary technicians, a clinical staff veterinarian at Lovelace violated the facility's written euthanasia protocol (SOP# ACL-2112.2). The session involved a six-year-old female cynomolgus macaque monkey (*Macaca fascicularis*)—a species designated as “[Endangered](#)” by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species—who was anesthetized for the procedure. After declaring the animal dead based solely on the absence of respiration and heartbeat, the staff veterinarian failed to perform the required secondary, physical method of euthanasia. The macaque was then sealed in a plastic biohazard bag and placed in a refrigerator to await necropsy.

Shortly thereafter, necropsy staff discovered that the animal was still alive—showing signs of respiration and a heartbeat inside the sealed, refrigerated container. The staff veterinarian had to return to administer an additional dose of euthanasia solution. According to the USDA, this failure to confirm death through appropriate measures “could have caused [the animal] to experience unnecessary distress and discomfort or pain.” The incident was classified as a **critical** violation of the Animal Welfare Act—[defined by the USDA](#) as having a “a serious or severe adverse effect on the health and well-being of the animal.”

This was not a tragic accident during emergency care. It was a preventable and egregious failure made by a licensed veterinarian while actively instructing students. Rather than modeling clinical competence, the staff veterinarian demonstrated a fundamental breakdown in professional responsibility—and did so in a controlled, scheduled teaching environment.

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This incident goes beyond individual error and points to broader institutional shortcomings. Lovelace failed to ensure basic safeguards were in place during a training session. The required euthanasia protocol was not followed, and it was only after a living animal was discovered in cold storage that the facility updated its SOP and implemented staff retraining. These failures raise serious questions about the appropriateness of Lovelace as a clinical training site for veterinary professionals.

Veterinarians practicing in New Mexico are obligated to uphold humane standards of care and ethical instruction. This staff veterinarian's conduct not only betrayed that obligation—it placed an animal at risk of extreme and preventable suffering and undermined the integrity of veterinary technician education in the state.

We respectfully urge the Board to:

1. Investigate the conduct of the staff veterinarian involved and determine whether disciplinary action is warranted.
2. Examine the broader training environment at Lovelace Biomedical Research Institute and consider whether it meets the standards expected of clinical training sites in New Mexico.
3. Alert veterinary technician program directors across the state about this incident and re-evaluate the appropriateness of using Lovelace as a site for clinical instruction.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are available to provide additional documentation or background upon request.

Sincerely,



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