

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

September 10, 2025

Claire Shipman
Acting President
Columbia UniversityVia e-mail: officeofthepresident@columbia.edu

Dear President Shipman:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10 million members and supporters globally, over 370,000 of whom live in New York State. Columbia University has maintained a Public Health Service-approved Animal Welfare Assurance for decades. This assurance requires adherence to the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, including implementing the 3Rs principle: replacing animal use whenever possible, reducing the number of animals used, and refining procedures to minimize suffering.

Despite this, Columbia continues to use thousands of animals in its laboratories. A recent inventory reported that Columbia used more than 113,412 mice and 301 rats in experiments. A 2024 federal report also documented the school's use of 77 guinea pigs, 116 hamsters, 34 rabbits, 163 monkeys, two sheep, 169 pigs, and 1,375 other Animal Welfare Act (AWA)-covered species in its laboratories. According to reports filed by Columbia with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the number of AWA-covered animals used in experiments skyrocketed by a staggering **209.8%** from 2014 to 2024. These figures directly contradict the university's assurance to the federal government that it would reduce animal use, exposing a troubling disregard for its stated commitment to adopting non-animal replacements and reducing reliance on animal experimentation.

What exactly is Columbia's plan to implement the 3Rs? You have used and killed animals for years with apparently no end in sight, despite your claim to abide by the best practices. We believe the public has the right to know if the university's pledge has been truthful.

Tax dollars wasted on cruel and ineffective research

In 2024, Columbia University received more than \$188 million in taxpayer funding from the National Institutes of Health, with approximately half of that amount directed toward experiments on animals. Such experiments include highly invasive [xenotransplantation procedures](#), in which experimenters cut open pigs' necks, removed their thymus organs, and transplanted them into other pigs and baboons.

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These surgeries resulted in severe complications—every recipient pig was killed immediately after the transplant, while the baboons suffered from life-threatening blood clots and organ rejection before ultimately being killed. In another laboratory, experimenters deliberately inflicted [painful injuries on rabbits](#) by cutting into their cheekbones and punching holes into a joint in their jaws to induce osteoarthritis. Despite the significant physiological differences between rabbits and humans, they were used as a “model” for the condition. After three months, all the rabbits were killed and dissected.

You must be aware that numerous studies dating back more than two decades reveal the failure of animal experiments to lead to cures and treatments for human beings. Conferences, papers, and all manner of information sources show the availability of countless superior, non-animal research methods that produce far more reliable and species-relevant results for human health than experiments on animals. PETA scientists’ [Research Modernization Now](#) provides a detailed strategy for replacing experiments on animals with humane and human-relevant methods. Have you read it, and what is your own plan to implement it or alternative solutions to this burgeoning use of animals on your campus?

Failure to comply with federal animal welfare regulations and guidelines

Columbia University has repeatedly failed to comply with minimum federal animal welfare regulations and guidelines, as evidenced by multiple violations documented in federal reports. In recent years, mice have drowned after workers improperly placed cages on racks, triggering water leaks and flooding the enclosures. Overcrowded mouse cages have also been a recurring issue, subjecting animals to inhumane conditions. In another disturbing incident, a monkey was left unattended in a restraint chair for eight hours beyond the duration specified in the approved protocol. These chronic failures to meet even the most basic animal welfare standards demonstrate a blatant disregard for both the law and the will of the American public.

Columbia’s failure to adhere to the 3Rs principles undermines public trust. We ask you to address this matter of public interest without delay. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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