

March 23, 2026

Jeffery K. Taubenberger, M.D., Ph.D.  
Acting Director  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Via e-mail: [taubenbergerj@niaid.nih.gov](mailto:taubenbergerj@niaid.nih.gov)

Dear Dr. Taubenberger:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which has more than 10.4 million members and supporters worldwide, to urge the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to terminate current federal funding to the New Iberia Research Center (NIRC), operated by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and to decline future funding for the facility. PETA writes at this critical moment because newly obtained whistleblower footage and federal inspection findings show that primates at NIRC are housed under conditions that violate animal welfare standards and fundamentally undermine the scientific integrity of data derived from experiments on these primates.

For decades, NIH has provided sustained, multi-year federal funding to support the breeding, housing, maintenance, and research use of primates at NIRC through awards administered primarily by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Active and recent awards include support for the [Simian Vaccine Evaluation Unit](#), including funding for the associated primate breeding colony, maintenance of primates, and related core administrative and technical support activities. NIH has also supported infrastructure expansion at the facility, including a [\\$2 million award](#) to renovate and expand laboratory space. In addition, NIRC has [supplied primates](#) to NIH-operated and NIH-funded laboratories for use in federally conducted research.

NIRC confines or experiments on more than 12,000 primates, including rhesus macaques, long-tailed macaques, pig-tailed macaques, African green monkeys, and chimpanzees. As the largest primate research facility in the United States and a recipient of federal funding, NIRC has significant animal welfare and regulatory responsibilities associated with maintaining such a large primate population.

### Conditions Documented in Recent Video Footage

PETA recently received video [footage](#), filmed earlier this year, from insiders at the New Iberia Research Center that depicts room after room of monkeys, confined alone in steel cages barely larger than their bodies, with waste pans beneath the cages containing accumulated feces and uneaten food. We see dilapidated conditions, including cage pans apparently propped up with overturned buckets, a pooled liquid covering much of the floor in one room, peeling floor paint, and multiple monkeys exhibiting hair loss on their arms and legs. Although recorded in low light, the video unmistakably documents bleak conditions, with the apparent "enrichment" limited to single strands of plastic beads hung outside the cages and

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

#### Washington

1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

#### Los Angeles

2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

#### Norfolk

501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org

PETA.org

#### Entities

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
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- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

occasionally, a worn Kong toy inside. These conditions appear inconsistent with federal Animal Welfare Regulations and raise concerns about compliance oversight at a federally funded primate facility.

### **Conditions at NIRC Further Undermine Any Purported Scientific Utility of NIH-Funded Primate Research**

NIH-funded primate research assumes that animals are clinically healthy and physiologically stable, and that they are housed in environments that do not introduce uncontrolled stressors. Conditions documented at NIRC, including chronic cold exposure, accumulated waste, unmanaged illness, inadequate enrichment, and prolonged isolation, undermine these assumptions. Such conditions introduce uncontrolled biological stress, compromising the reliability, reproducibility, and translational relevance of data derived from NIH-funded primate studies.

### **Recent Violations and PHS Noncompliance Findings**

Federal oversight authorities have documented multiple violations of the Animal Welfare Act and findings of PHS Policy noncompliance at NIRC. The following findings were recorded within the past six years, overlapping with NIH's active grant funding at the facility:

- December 17, 2025 – [USDA Routine Inspection](#): Primates were shipped more than 10 days beyond the dates recorded on Certificates of Veterinary Inspection. The citation was issued following a PETA complaint pointing out that a USDA-accredited veterinarian must examine primates no more than 10 days before they cross state lines to reduce the spread of disease among captive monkeys.
- June 10, 2025 – [USDA Routine Inspection](#): Nineteen rhesus macaques died between January 21 and January 23, 2025, during a period when outdoor temperatures fell as low as 2°F. The USDA determined that the monkeys were not acclimated to such temperatures and that outdoor housing did not provide adequate shelter from wind and cold. The USDA further reported that subsequent necropsies revealed that many of the monkeys who died had underlying medical conditions. These animals were not experimental subjects but rather part of the general colony and therefore should have been medically screened, closely monitored, and excluded from environmental exposure risks. This finding raises a fundamental concern: either NIRC failed to detect widespread medical vulnerability within its colony, or it confined medically vulnerable animals outdoors in freezing conditions despite those risks. Either scenario reflects a breakdown in veterinary oversight incompatible with the standards expected of an NIH-funded research facility.
- September 15, 2022 – [PHS Noncompliance Finding](#): A rhesus macaque who had been transferred from a cage to an outdoor enclosure was found to be paralyzed—the cause of injury was unknown. The monkey was euthanized.
- August 26, 2021 – [USDA Focused Inspection](#): Five infant rhesus macaques died of dehydration following the failure of a water pressure regulator serving their housing room.
- June 16, 2021 – [PHS Noncompliance Finding](#): Five rhesus macaques died from exposure to freezing cold temperatures (down to 18 degrees F).

- December 14, 2020 – [PHS Noncompliance Finding](#): Three rhesus macaques held in outdoor enclosures were found dead, and a fourth was euthanized after they developed seizures from the heat.

Taken together, these violations and PHS noncompliance findings demonstrate a consistent pattern of environmental exposure deaths, preventable harm, and failures in veterinary oversight within an NIH-supported facility.

### **Prior USDA Enforcement Actions**

Beyond the violations and PHS noncompliance findings outlined above, USDA enforcement records document a history of compliance failures at NIRC. In 2007, the facility was fined \$2,062 after 55 rhesus macaques escaped. In 2010, the USDA imposed an \$18,000 [fine](#) for six violations of federal law, including the documented failure of the facility's internal oversight processes to protect animals. In 2013, they were [fined](#) \$38,571 after three juvenile monkeys died while trapped in a chute and were not discovered for several days. In 2015, the USDA's Office of the General Counsel filed an official [complaint](#) citing multiple Animal Welfare Act violations, including unsafe housing conditions and deficiencies in veterinary oversight, which resulted in a \$100,000 civil penalty imposed in 2017.

### **Implications for Continued NIH Funding**

NIH funding decisions are predicated on the assumption that supported animal models are scientifically valid, ethically managed, and responsibly overseen. The documented pattern of environmental exposure deaths, unmanaged medical vulnerability, and chronic housing deficiencies at NIRC demonstrates that this assumption does not hold.

Continuing to fund NIRC does not merely risk animal suffering; it risks the integrity of the science NIH is charged with stewarding. Public funds should not subsidize a facility where basic animal welfare standards have repeatedly failed. We urge NIH to terminate current funding and decline future awards to NIRC, and direct funding to human-based research technologies consistent with agency priorities.

Sincerely,



Lisa Jones-Engel, Ph.D.  
Chief Science Advisor, Primate Experimentation  
Laboratory Investigations Department  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals  
[LisaJE@peta.org](mailto:LisaJE@peta.org)

cc: [jayanta.bhattacharya@nih.hhs.gov](mailto:jayanta.bhattacharya@nih.hhs.gov); [kennedyg@nih.gov](mailto:kennedyg@nih.gov)