



July 23, 2026

Bernadette Juarez
Deputy Administrator
Animal Care
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Via e-mail: Bernadette.R.Juarez@USDA.gov; ac.complaints@usda.gov

Dear Ms. Juarez:

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), I respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture investigate whether Johns Hopkins University violated the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and its implementing regulations during an experiment involving piglets that was the subject of a self-reported violation of the Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals to the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW), filed as [OLAW Case 3X](#).

According to the university's report, an undisclosed number of piglets were fed formula containing bacteria obtained from a patient with necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC). Within one to two days of the initial feeding, most of the piglets “presented clinically in poor health and either died or required euthanasia.” The university further reported that its Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) suspended the protocol—a highly unusual action that underscores the seriousness of the incident.

The university determined that “the lab failed to seek veterinary support as required in a timely manner when the animals exhibited a decline in health and the lab chose to administer care on their own.” The report also states that the laboratory personnel primarily responsible for performing the procedures and post-procedure monitoring were inadequately trained and were not directly supervised by more experienced research staff.

The corrective actions implemented by the university appear to indicate that important safeguards may have been lacking during both the design and execution of the experiment. According to the report, Johns Hopkins required enhanced monitoring of the piglets, objective assessments of health status, overnight monitoring, refined humane endpoint criteria, and mandatory training for all personnel. These measures suggest that the protocol and its implementation may not have provided adequate protection to ensure timely recognition of declining health, appropriate veterinary involvement, or sufficient training for personnel responsible for animal care.

Taken together, the reported deficiencies raise serious questions regarding compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and its implementing regulations, including, but not limited to, requirements governing adequate veterinary care (9

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
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

C.F.R. § 2.33(b)(2)); daily observation of animals and timely communication with the attending veterinarian regarding illnesses and injuries (9 C.F.R. § 2.33(b)(3)); appropriate training and supervision of personnel involved in animal procedures and care (9 C.F.R. § 2.32(a)); and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee review to ensure that procedures minimize pain and distress, including through appropriate monitoring and humane endpoints (9 C.F.R. § 2.31(d)(1)(iv)). While OLAW addressed the institution's compliance with PHS Policy, the USDA is responsible for determining whether the reported conduct also violated the Animal Welfare Act.

Accordingly, PETA respectfully requests that the USDA investigate this matter, determine whether violations of the Animal Welfare Act or its implementing regulations occurred, and, if violations are substantiated, take any enforcement action the agency deems appropriate.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information that would assist your review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alka Chandna".

Alka Chandna, Ph.D.
Vice President
Laboratory Oversight & Special Cases
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
AlkaC@peta.org | 757-803-6447