Mauritius' Role in the Global Monkey Trade

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The U.S. experimentation industry's demand for globally endangered long-tailed macaques has been a driving force behind Mauritius' emergence as the main supplier of monkeys for laboratories, raising serious concerns about wild capture, animal suffering, disease risks, and biosecurity.

THE LEADING SUPPLIER OF MONKEYS FOR EXPERIMENTS

- Long-tailed macaques were introduced on the island centuries ago and now live in free-ranging populations across the country. These macaques continue to be captured from the wild to replenish commercial breeding colonies or for direct export.
- Mauritius legally permits wild-caught long-tailed macaques to be exported for biomedical research. U.S. laboratory suppliers, including Charles River Laboratories and BCUS, have imported wild-caught macaques from Mauritius.
- Between 2020 and 2025, more than 54,000 long-tailed macaques[1] from Mauritius were imported into the U.S. Seven commercial monkey-breeding and export facilities operate on the island.
- A 2026 whistleblower affidavit from a former employee of a Mauritian monkey-breeding facility alleged that wild-caught infants were separated from their mothers after weaning and mixed with other macaques, raising concerns about whether they could later be distinguished from animals reported as captive-bred. The whistleblower also alleged that adult wild-caught males, newborn males, and infertile macaques were routinely killed.
- Mauritius' expanding monkey trade operates against a backdrop of worsening public-sector corruption concerns. In Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index,[2] Mauritius scored 48 out of 100, continuing a decade-long decline in its score.

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Year	Long-Tailed Macaques Imported From Mauritius Into the U.S.*	Long-Tailed Macaques Imported From Mauritius Into the EU and the U.K.**
2020	6,507	4,356
2021	9,931	4,462
2022	6,929	4,448
2023	9,868	4,072
2024	10,195	4,117
2025	10,696	3,564
Total	54,126	25,019

*U.S. import figures are from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.[1]

**European import figures are from Statistics Mauritius.[3] These figures may substantially underrepresent the actual number of long-tailed macaques imported from Mauritius.

DISEASE AND BIOSECURITY RISKS FROM MACAQUE IMPORTS

MULTI-ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT BACTERIA

In 2023, long-tailed macaques imported from Mauritius were found carrying multiple antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VRSA), one of the rarest drug-resistant pathogens reported in humans.[4] The bacteria spread from imported macaques to another monkey housed in the same room, demonstrating how resistant pathogens can spread within research facilities.

TUBERCULOSIS (TB)

In 2023, a tuberculosis outbreak occurred at Northern Biomedical Research in Michigan involving wild-caught long-tailed macaques imported from Mauritius.[5] According to documents obtained through an FOIA request, two laboratory workers tested positive after exposure and were referred for medical evaluation and treatment.

HEPATITIS A

In a 2024 study, nearly half of the Mauritian-origin long-tailed macaques tested at a European contract research laboratory were carrying hepatitis A virus.[6] The infections were initially mistaken for drug-related effects during research studies, delaying research and regulatory submissions. A previously unrecognized hepatitis A virus genotype was also identified in Mauritian macaques at a German facility.[7]



A macaque at a Mauritius breeding farm shows swelling around the eye following a positive tuberculosis skin test in 2025.

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THE COMPANIES DRIVING MAURITIUS' MONKEY EXPORT TRADE

NOVEPRIM LTD. AND CAMARNEY S.L.

- Charles River Laboratories, the world's largest supplier of research animals, increased its ownership stake in Noveprim to 90% in 2023, giving Charles River direct control over a major supplier of research monkeys.
- Charles River is the largest importer and user of monkeys in the U.S. and profits from a global monkey-supply chain that has been linked to animal welfare concerns, disease risks, and investigations into the sourcing of illegal wild-caught macaques.
- A 2023 undercover investigation by One Voice documented deplorable conditions inside Noveprim and other Mauritian monkey-breeding facilities, including injured macaques, confinement in barren cages, and rough handling.[8]
- Many Noveprim monkeys pass through Camarney, Noveprim's Spanish subsidiary and primary European quarantine and distribution center, which is also owned by Charles River Laboratories. Camarney has imported thousands of macaques from Mauritius and distributed them to laboratories around the world, including in the U.S. In 2025, published photographs from inside the facility showed sick, injured, and mutilated macaques housed in deplorable conditions.[9]



Infant macaques torn from their mothers are confined at the Noveprim facility.



An emaciated long-tailed macaque with part of his tail missing at Camarney, Spain.

BIOCULTURE LTD.

- Its U.S. sister facility, BCUS, in Florida, quarantines imported macaques before they are transported to laboratories across the U.S.
- In 2023, a tuberculosis outbreak was reported at the Mauritius export facility, resulting in the killing of 200 long-tailed macaques and the infection of at least one worker.[10]
- According to a whistleblower affidavit, at least 10 employees were infected during a hepatitis A outbreak at the Mauritius facility in 2025.
- At BCUS in 2026, a newly imported monkey was negligently left inside a shipping crate and thrown into a dumpster. BCUS was unaware that the monkey was missing until the waste handling company transported the dumpster five days later to its facility in Miami, where he escaped, was recaptured, and eventually was euthanized.

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BIOSPHÈRE TRADING LTD.

- The Mauritian government approved the expansion of Biosphère Trading in 2021 and authorized the capture of 1,000 wild macaques.[11]
- Two years later, Mauritian animal protection group Quatre Tilapat took Biosphère Trading to the Supreme Court after obtaining drone images showing macaques confined in cages that were exposed to rain and cold.[12] The group asked the court to order the destruction of the cages and release the macaques into the wild.[13] In 2025, the court rejected the request, allowing Biosphère Trading to continue operating.[14]

HAMMERHEAD INTERNATIONAL LTD.

- In 2023, Hammerhead International Ltd. captured 446 long-tailed macaques from the wild without authorization for a proposed breeding and export facility. The animals were later seized by Mauritian authorities, with reports describing that several monkeys were crammed together inside 80-by-40-by-40 cm metal cages, without food or water, and kept in filthy, poorly ventilated, and sometimes completely dark rooms.[15]
- After being transferred to Biosphère Trading Ltd., only 192 out of the 446 macaques were still alive by early 2026. More than half had died or been euthanized due to tuberculosis, injuries, or diarrhea.[16]

As long as U.S. laboratories continue to demand monkeys for experimentation, wild macaques will be taken from their natural habitat in Mauritius, confined in breeding facilities, and shipped around the globe despite ongoing concerns about animal suffering, disease risks, and biosecurity.

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