AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

PETA

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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November 10, 2026

Debra Hickman
Chief Accreditation Officer
AAALAC International
Sent via e-mail: dhickman@aaalac.org

Dear Ms. Hickman:

I am writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to ask Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALAC) to place the University of Washington (UW) on restricted accreditation status pending completion of the independent audit of Washington National Primate Research Center records and AAALAC's subsequent review of its findings.

AAALAC conducted its July 20–23, 2026 UW site accreditation visit while serious problems at the primate center were already occurring and under investigation. A February 2026 brain surgery had ended in what UW records describe as a "best guess craniotomy." In the preceding three years, the USDA documented 21 Animal Welfare Act noncompliances,[1] including monkeys denied required pain medication, a monkey who developed severe radiation toxicity after researchers exceeded the approved frequency of procedures and failed to provide required protective goggles, monkeys who escaped from improperly secured cages and injured one another, and a monkey who died from barotrauma after malfunctioning equipment forced dangerously high pressure into his lungs and chest. Monkeys were also administered experimental substances at doses that departed substantially from approved protocols. USDA also issued UW an official warning.[2]

The barotrauma death occurred during AAALAC's previous accreditation visit. UW informed the site visitors, who reviewed the incident and responded favorably to UW's investigation and proposed corrective actions. The research program involved in that death is now implicated in the surgical, veterinary, and recordkeeping failures under investigation at UW. That history should weigh heavily in AAALAC's assessment of whether UW's assurances and corrective actions can again be accepted without independent verification.

On October 15, less than three months after AAALAC's visit, UW's IACUC heard the extent of the problems. Months after the "best guess craniotomy," UW still couldn't determine who authorized the surgery to continue or whether the Institutional Official, who had been consulted during the surgery, approved the decision. The IACUC heard about missing and inaccurate surgical, pathology, and necropsy records; researchers interfering with veterinarians' access to and

[1] Federal Animal Welfare Violations in the Laboratories of the University of Washington
[2] March 10, 2025 USDA Official Warning Notice of Alleged Violations to University of Washington

treatment of monkeys and the Attending Veterinarian's account that veterinary medical advice was ignored so frequently that veterinarians eventually stopped offering it. Personnel were also covering windows and restricting access so veterinary and behavioral staff couldn't see what was happening inside monkey rooms; and a monkey who continued to be used in experiments while an infection around his head implant destroyed bone and spread into his brain.

These failures reached directly into the conduct of the experiments themselves. One monkey continued to be used in behavioral trials while an infection around his head implant destroyed bone and spread into his brain. IACUC members questioned whether his deteriorating condition had altered the behavior researchers were measuring, raising the possibility that UW was collecting experimental data from an animal whose underlying clinical condition was itself affecting the study outcome.

UW's attending veterinarian described an "egregious failure of adequate surgical and pathology record keeping" and what she believed was a "programmatic failure of adequate record keeping" at the primate center. UW still does not know the extent of those failures. The IACUC called for an independent audit of primate center records that the Attending Veterinarian and Institutional Official said is expected to take at least a year.

The information presented to UW's IACUC concerns core components of an accredited animal care and use program, including veterinary authority, institutional oversight, surgical practices, post-approval monitoring, and the accuracy and completeness of animal records. These are matters AAALAC evaluates in determining and maintaining accreditation. AAALAC also states that it investigates possible deficiencies identified during site visits, reported by accredited institutions, or brought to its attention through other means.[3]

We are therefore providing AAALAC with the recording of UW's October 15 IACUC meeting[4] and our October 29 letter to the UW Board of Regents,[5] which identifies the cases, investigations, recordkeeping failures, and statements by UW officials discussed above. We encourage the Council on Accreditation to listen to the recording itself, including the discussion of the independent audit. These materials provide AAALAC with information directly relevant to its current review of UW's accreditation.

We request that AAALAC:

1. **Place UW on restricted accreditation status** pending completion of the independent audit and AAALAC's review of its findings.[6] AAALAC should not grant or maintain full accreditation while UW is still determining the extent of failures in surgical, pathology, necropsy, and other records. AAALAC identifies deferred accreditation and probation as forms of restricted accreditation status when significant deficiencies remain unresolved.[7]
2. **Require UW to provide AAALAC with the completed independent audit**, its underlying findings, and a corrective-action plan addressing every deficiency identified. Full accreditation should not be restored until AAALAC has reviewed that material, verified the corrective actions, and determined that the deficiencies have been corrected.

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[3] AAALAC Accreditation Process
[4] Oct 15, 2026 University of Washington IACUC meeting
[5] Oct 29, 2026 Board of Regents Letter
[6] AAALAC Categories of accreditation
[7] AAALAC Accreditation process following adverse events

3. **Determine whether UW failed to report information** required under AAALAC's Rules of Accreditation and, if so, address that failure in determining UW's accreditation status. AAALAC states that accredited institutions must promptly report specified adverse events and that failure to report reportable events may lead to revocation of accreditation.

Given the breadth and seriousness of these failures, we urge AAALAC to act immediately and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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cc: Susanne Rensing, D.V.M., Council on Accreditation President, accredit@aaalac.org
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