



May 19, 2022

The Honorable Michael O. Freeman
Hennepin County Attorney

Via e-mail: citizeninfo@co.hennepin.mn.us

Dear Mr. Freeman:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals U.S.—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally, and PETA U.S. is the largest animal rights organization in the world—to notify your office of apparent violations of Minnesota's prohibitions against cruelty to animals. Specifically, I want to draw your attention to the neglect and disregard that characterize the treatment of vulnerable animals held in the laboratories of the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities (UMN), located at 240 Williamson Hall, 231 Pillsbury Dr. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455. PETA respectfully requests that your office initiate an investigation and file appropriate charges against UMN for any violations of Minnesota law prohibiting people from “willfully instigat[ing] or in any way further[ing] any act of cruelty to any animal or animals, or any act tending to produce cruelty to animals.”

According to records obtained by PETA through the Freedom of Information Act, UMN reported **more than 50 violations of federal animal welfare guidelines** in its laboratories to the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare between January 2018 and February 2022.¹ Among other serious documented issues, UMN experimenters failed to give adequate pain relief to nearly 700 pigs, hamsters, mice, and rats used in painful and invasive procedures.

Employees' negligence resulted in the starvation, dehydration, and deaths of numerous animals. For example, two mice were discovered dead after their cage was sent through an autoclave—a high-temperature cage steamer used for sterilization. Employees failed to provide other mice with food for four days, and they were found lethargic, hunched, and in need of emergency supportive veterinary care. Four monkeys' water was severely restricted, against protocol.

Several experimenters deviated from approved protocols and conducted experiments or used animals not included in protocols that the university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee had approved—exacerbating the pain and distress experienced by animals. Among these instances, experimenters performed unapproved cardiovascular surgery on rats and unapproved tail amputation procedures on more than 152 mice, sometimes without pain relief. Forty mice were subjected to multiple facial vein-bleeding procedures that had not been approved. Live zebrafish were used in a cryopreservation study—in which very low temperatures are used to preserve living cells and tissues—in contravention of the protocol, which did not approve the use of live animals. Two rats were perfused—experimenters pumped a fixative into the animals' vascular

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
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system to “fix” the tissues, similar to embalming—and tissue was collected for an unapproved study. A monkey was subjected to two anesthetic procedures but was not given seven days to recover from the first procedure as stipulated in the protocol.

Employees’ negligence and lack of proper monitoring resulted in the entrapment of two weanling mice between the wire bar and lid of a cage following an ear-tagging procedure. One of the mice died, and the other became dehydrated. On two separate occasions, four monkeys were locked in one quadrant of a caging unit for up to 15 hours because employees did not remove and secure the cage dividers. Six male mice from different groups were inappropriately put together in a single cage, leading to serious fighting. They were euthanized because of the severity of their injuries.

Experimenters failed to follow approved euthanasia protocols in the school’s laboratories and failed to euthanize animals in a timely manner, resulting in exacerbated suffering. For example, a weanling mouse was discovered alive in a euthanasia bag following improper euthanasia. In another case, an experimenter began euthanizing a cage of adult and weanling mice but left the room and failed to return. When a veterinarian discovered the animals in the CO₂ euthanasia chamber the following day, they were still alive. After experimenters ignored a veterinary directive to euthanize a female guinea pig and her four pups, three of the pups were found dead and the mother was found in a moribund state—likely with labored breathing, sunken eyes, and impaired mobility, resulting in an inability to reach food or water.

It appears that UMN may have violated Minnesota law by unjustifiably instigating acts of cruelty to animals in its care, which resulted in their suffering. PETA respectfully requests an investigation into these apparent violations of state law.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I’d be happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can contact me at AndreaK@peta.org. PETA would appreciate having the opportunity to discuss this topic, and I will follow up with you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,



Andréa Kuchy, Ph.D.
Research Associate
Laboratory Investigations Department

¹A summary table of individual records is available at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6re95orzww54igv/Summary%20of%20UMN%20violations.docx?dl=0>.