



September 21, 2017

Manuel Michel
Executive Director
National Mango Board
3101 Maguire Blvd, Suite 111
Orlando, FL 32803
Via email: mmichel@mango.org

RE: Funding for flawed animal studies

Dear Mr. Michel,

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide, I am writing to express our concern that the National Mango Board (NMB) is funding experiments on animals. Considering the serious scientific and ethical problems associated with this research, we urge NMB to end funding for these and other animal studies for the reasons outlined below.

According to NMB's website and other publications, NMB has paid Oklahoma State University experimenter Edralin A Lucas to feed confined mice unhealthy, high fat diets,¹ pierce their abdomens² and tails³ with needles, and perform invasive surgical procedures on these animals.⁴ Over 300 individual mice were killed in these NMB-supported experiments. In addition, NMB has paid Texas A&M faculty Susanne and Stephen Talcott to implant mice with tumors,⁵ shove tubing down their throats at least daily—and sometimes more frequently than that,⁶ and inject harsh chemicals into rats' intestines to destroy their colons.⁷ At least 100 individual animals were killed in these NMB-funded experiments.

¹ Lucas EA, et al. "Mango modulates body fat and plasma glucose and lipids in mice fed a high-fat diet." *Br J Nutr* 106.10 (2011): 1495-1505.

² Lucas EA, 2011

³ Ojo B, et al. "Mango Supplementation Modulates Gut Microbial Dysbiosis and Short-Chain Fatty Acid Production Independent of Body Weight Reduction in C57BL/6 Mice Fed a High-Fat Diet." *J Nutr* 146.8 (2016): 1483-1491.

⁴ Lucas EA. "Effects of Mango on Bone Parameters in Mice Fed High Fat Diet," (2010) Mango will improve bone parameters in ovariectomized mice a model of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women" (2016). <http://www.mango.org/en/Research>

⁵ Nemec MJ, et al. "Polyphenolics from mango (*Mangifera indica* L.) suppress breast cancer ductal carcinoma in situ proliferation through activation of AMPK pathway and suppression of mTOR in athymic nude mice." *J Nutr Biochem* 41 (2017): 12-19.; Banerjee N, et al. "Mango polyphenolics suppressed tumor growth in breast cancer xenografts in mice: role of the PI3K/AKT pathway and associated microRNAs." *Nutr Res* 35 (2015): 744-751.

⁶ Nemec MJ, 2017; Banerjee N 2015

⁷ Kim H, et al. "Comparison of anti-inflammatory mechanisms of mango (*Mangifera Indica* L.) and pomegranate (*Punica Granatum* L.) in a preclinical model of colitis." *Mol Nutr Food Res* 60.9 (2016): 1912-1923.

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Since the NMB is interested in how mangoes influence human health, not the health of mice and rats, the idea here was likely that mice and rats would make good surrogates for humans in these experiments. However, the evidence does not support this assumption. Other species, confined in laboratories, do not make good scientific substitutes for humans living in a stimulating and varied world. For obesity, diabetes, cancer, and inflammation particularly—four major conditions investigated in the above animal experiments—scientists feel that the use of rodents is actually *impeding* meaningful discovery, due to significant differences in physiology. I have provided evidence in the attached supplement.

Other commodity Research and Promotion Programs, such as the [National Processed Raspberry Council](#) and the Highbush Blueberry Council, have already agreed to shift funding from animal experiments to human-based research methodologies that are more applicable to human health.

We applaud the efforts NMB has already taken to conduct human studies, and encourage the NMB to shift their funding entirely towards more human-relevant non-animal testing methods. We feel certain that, considering the deliciousness of their commodity, the Board will not be short of mango-loving human volunteers.

May I hear from you on this urgent matter? I can be reached by e-mail at EmilyT@peta.org.

Sincerely,



Emily Trunnell, Ph.D.
Research Associate and IACUC Liaison
Laboratory Investigations Department
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
501 Front Street
Norfolk, VA 23510
EmilyT@peta.org

CC: Leonardo Ortega, Director of Research, lortega@mango.org



Obesity and Diabetes

Diet-induced obese animals are most often made obese with exposure to commercially manufactured pre-defined diets, ignoring the heterogeneity of the human experience with food. Following consumption of obesogenic diets, rodents show high resistance to the cardiovascular complications that constitute the leading causes of obesity-related mortality in humans (Lai, Barnard and Chandrasekera), underscoring the significant physiological differences between humans and mice. On the other hand, genetic models of obesity clearly lack construct validity: The observed phenotypes in these animals are only “secondary to genetic mutations that do not reflect disease etiology in humans” (Wang, Chandrasekera and Pippin). Most genetic models of type II diabetes mellitus (T2DM) are based on leptin- or leptin receptor-deficiency when neither of these represent an important contributor to T2DM in humans (Wang, Chandrasekera and Pippin).

T2DM is a disease of glucose misregulation that leads to broad physiological effects. Rodents differ from humans on every tier of glucose regulation, from the level of nucleic acids, to differences in proteins, pathways, cells, tissues, and organs, to disease progression at the organism level, all the way to dramatic differences in environmental exposure and autonomy of lifestyle (Chandrasekera, Charukeshi and Pippin). Despite these very clear discrepancies, obesity and diabetes research in animals continues while more relevant, human-based methods are often ignored.

A major confound in animal studies of metabolic disease is the “control” animals against which “treated” animals are compared. In the experimental setting, animals are sedentary, without environmental stimulation, overfed, and are at times already insulin resistant and at risk for premature death, even without obesogenic diets (Martin, Ji and Maudsley). In addition, general laboratory temperatures are far below thermoneutrality for rodents, contributing to metabolic stress, increasing food intake in both “control” and “treated” animals, and further skewing data (Lai, Barnard and Chandrasekera).

Inflammation and Immune Response

With regard to using rodents as surrogates for the human inflammatory response, it is important to recognize the substantial evidence that rodents are not humans, and that there are certain fields in particular where the physiology between the two species has been shown to be far too different to warrant the use of rodents as research subjects. One of the most noted fields in this category is inflammation. In 2004, a compelling review was published in *The Journal of Immunology* outlining the many differences between mouse and human immune systems, including in the anatomy of lymphoid tissue, ratios of white blood cell types, antimicrobial peptide profiles, cytokine profiles and functions, mechanisms for crosstalk between the adaptive and innate immune systems, antibody subtypes, development and regulation of lymphocytes, and activation of clotting factors (Mestas and Hughes). Since then several other analyses have been published detailing the vast differences between human and rodent immunology. In 2013, a large and collaborative statistical analysis showed that the responses of mice following acute inflammatory stressors such as burn, trauma, endotoxin exposure, and sepsis were “close to random in matching their human counterparts” and supported the “higher priority

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for translational medical research to focus on the more complex human conditions rather than relying on mouse models to study human inflammatory disease” (Seok, Warren and Cuenca). Logically these differences make sense: We humans “do not live with our heads a half-inch off the ground” (Mestas and Hughes) and we have considerably longer lifespans and a larger body size than do rodents (Mestas and Hughes; Zschaler, Schlorke and Arnhold). As concisely stated by Leist and Hartung, “humans are definitely no 70-kg mice” (Leist and Hartung).

Cancer

Oncology drugs have the lowest “likelihood of approval” among all disease categories. A survey of 4,451 drugs made by 835 companies between 2003 and 2011 found that only 6.7 percent of cancer drugs were approved after entering the first phase of clinical trials, even though they were all successful in preclinical testing. The authors admit that the “current animal models (e.g., xenograft tumour models in mice [\[the type of model used in NMB-funded experiments\]](#)) can be poor predictors of clinical outcomes in humans” (Hay, David and Craighead). Even though study design and other logistical issues can be problematic, “most futilities in fact originate from molecular mechanisms of the drug(s) tested” and “crucial genetic, molecular, immunologic and cellular differences between humans and mice prevent animal models from serving as effective means to seek for a cancer cure” (Mak, Evaniew and Ghert).

Human-relevant alternatives to the use of animals in obesity, diabetes, immunology, and cancer research include human intervention, human imaging, *in vitro* technologies using human heterologous cell lines, organotypic 3D cell culture, the use of human organs *ex vivo*, genome-wide association studies, “organs-on-chips,” and *in silico* modelling (Chandrasekera, Charukeshi and Pippin (1); Carnell, Gibson and Benson; Andersen and Sandholt). In fact, the United States Food and Drug Administration has approved a closed-loop insulin pump developed using *in silico* modelling as a substitute for animal testing, providing just one example of how “Realistic computer simulation is capable of providing invaluable information about the safety and the limitations of closed-loop control algorithms, guiding clinical studies, and out-ruling ineffective control scenarios in a cost-effective manner” (Kovatchev, Breton and Man).

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August 10, 2022

Clark Golden
Chair
National Mango Board

Via e-mail: clark@amazonprod.com

Dear Mr. Golden,

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide. **Based on the information presented below, we request that the National Mango Board (NMB) adopt a public policy banning the funding, conducting and commissioning of animal testing unless explicitly required by law.**

As you are likely aware, the NMB has funded numerous cruel and deadly animal tests,¹ with publications as recent as 2018. In 2017, NMB Executive Director, Manuel Michel, wrote to PETA stating, “The Board of Directors did not fund any research studies that involve animals in 2017 and does not plan to do so in 2018. The information you have shared will be considered when deciding what research studies to fund in the future.” (Manuel Michel, e-mail communication, September 2017.) We have since followed up several times, urging the NMB to formally ban this practice, but we have not received a reply.

Mango consumers, farmers, and companies want to avoid animal testing. More than 100,000 concerned consumers have written to several industry checkoff groups, including the NMB, via our online action alert, urging them to ban animal testing unless explicitly required by law, in favor of more effective, ethical, and economical animal-free methods.²

Advocacy groups for farmers have also spoken out against animal testing by the checkoffs. Family Agriculture Resource Management Services, a national advocacy group for Black farmers and leading nonprofit dedicated to reversing small farmland loss in low-income rural areas, wrote to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and various checkoffs, including the NMB, that, “Many

¹ PETA. Animal Experiments Funded by the Research and Promotion Boards. n.d. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Animal-Experiments-Funded-by-the-Research-and-Promotion-Boards.pdf>

² PETA. Animals Beheaded for Blueberries? USDA Farmer 'Tax' Funds Cruel Tests. Updated October 28, 2021. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://support.peta.org/page/22117/action/1>

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farmers in today’s economy are struggling. They don’t need barbaric tests on animals to sell their agricultural commodities. Rather, they need economic relief from inflated assessment fees that are wasted on worthless experiments on animals.”³ Farms to Grow, Inc., a national advocacy group for Black and other underserved minority farmers, also wrote to the USDA and various checkoffs, stating, “It ... defies logic that these tests—in which animals have been beheaded for blueberries, mutilated for mangoes, and suffocated for soybeans—would purport to help promote those agricultural products, since the majority of consumers don’t support animal cruelty.”⁴

After discussions with PETA, more than 150 major food and beverage manufacturers globally have established policies against conducting, funding, and commissioning experiments on animals that are not explicitly required by law.⁵ Many of these companies had previously contributed to animal tests on food ingredients, which is the same category of tests funded by the NMB, but they no longer support this practice. Further, many of these companies also use mangoes in their businesses, including Campbell Soup Company (under their brand such as V8), Dole Food Company, Del Monte Pacific, Hain Celestial Group (under their brand such as Earth’s Best), and many more. Some companies have even extended their animal testing policies to their suppliers. For example, Chobani Global Holdings has the same policy of animal testing (“Chobani does not fund, conduct, or commission any tests on animals unless they are explicitly required by law”) in its supplier code of conduct.⁶ This effectively prevents any mango suppliers affiliated with the NMB to supply to Chobani because they fund animal tests through their assessment fees to the NMB.

The NMB’s funding of animal tests on mangoes designed to promote the marketing of mangoes would be ineffective, given that the farmers and end users of mangoes, including companies and consumers, are against animal testing.

After PETA’s public campaign that resulted in more than 85,000 concerned consumers writing and/or calling them, the Hass Avocado Board (HAB) established a public policy stating that it “does not support, fund, or conduct animal research.”⁷ By pursuing only non-animal research, HAB will now be supporting human-relevant studies that advance human health.

We urge the NMB to emulate HAB’s progressive position. Again, our suggested public policy language is: “*The National Mango Board does not conduct, fund, or commission tests on animals unless explicitly required by law.*”

³ PETA. National Black Agriculture Group Joins PETA’s Push to End ‘Tax’ Forcing Farmers to Fund Animal Tests. July 7, 2021. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.peta.org/media/news-releases/national-black-agriculture-group-joins-petas-push-to-end-tax-forcing-farmers-to-fund-animal-tests/>

⁴ PETA. Nat’l Black Farm Org Joins PETA, Slams Suffocating, Beheading Animals for Marketing. October 28, 2021. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.peta.org/media/news-releases/natl-black-farm-org-joins-peta-slams-suffocating-beheading-animals-for-marketing/>

⁵ PETA. Victory! Global Food Industry Ditches Deadly Animal Tests—See the List. n.d. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.peta.org/features/victories-food-drink-companies-refuse-animal-tests/>

⁶ Supplier code of conduct. n.d. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.chobani.com/supplier-code-of-conduct/>

⁷ Research Grant Program. February 28, 2022. Accessed August 10, 2022. <https://research.loveonetoday.com/research-grant-program/>

You can contact me directly via e-mail at FrancesC@peta.org. Please reply by September 7, 2022. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frances Cheng', written in a cursive style.

Frances Cheng, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department

cc: Christopher Ciruli, Vice Chair, chris@cirulibrothers.com
Thomas Hall, Marketing and Communications Chair, tom@freskaproduce.com
Marsela McGrane, Treasurer, marsela@visionproduceco.com
Manuel Michel, Executive Director, mmichel@mango.org



November 1, 2023

Albert Perez
Chair
National Mango Board

Dear Mr. Perez:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—to let you know that today and on Wednesday, November 8, we're running the full-page ad shown below in the *Orlando Weekly*. In addition, a mobile billboard ad with the same message will circulate today near your headquarters. **Again, we urge the National Mango Board (NMB) to adopt a public policy against animal testing. Our suggested language is “The National Mango Board does not conduct, fund, or commission tests on animals unless explicitly required by law.”**



As you know, the NMB has funded several cruel and deadly tests on animals for the purpose of establishing human health claims for marketing mangoes,¹ using mandatory assessment fees from mango farmers. PETA has urged the NMB to establish a public policy banning the conducting, funding, and commissioning of animal tests since 2017. National advocacy groups for Black and other underserved farmers, including Family Agriculture Resource Management

¹PETA. Animal Experiments Funded by the Research and Promotion Boards. n.d. Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Animal-Experiments-Funded-by-the-Research-and-Promotion-Boards.pdf>

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Services and Farms to Grow,² and more than 104,000 concerned consumers³ have also made this same plea. However, the NMB continues to drag its feet. Earlier this year, your organization issued an insufficient statement via a Google review reply, stating that “the National Mango Board (NMB) is not funding any research studies that involve animals and does not plan to do so in the future.”⁴ However, the NMB refused to clarify whether it prohibits or allows the conducting and commissioning of animal testing, and its statement falls short of a prohibition on animal testing.

There has been progress on this issue from your peers. Specifically, after hearing from PETA and more than 85,000 of our supporters, the Hass Avocado Board established a public policy, unequivocally stating that it “does not support, fund, or conduct animal research.”⁵ More than 170 major food and beverage manufacturers globally have also established policies against conducting, funding, and commissioning experiments on animals that are not explicitly required by law, after engaging in discussions with PETA.⁶

You can contact me directly at FrancesC@peta.org. Thank you for your consideration. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,



Frances Cheng, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department

²PETA. National Black Farmers Groups and PETA: Stop Bloody Animal Tests, USDA! October 28, 2021.

Accessed November 1, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/features/usda-farmer-tax-funds-cruel-tests/>

³PETA. Animals Beheaded for Blueberries? USDA Farmer “Tax” Funds Cruel Tests. n.d. Accessed

November 1, 2023. <https://support.peta.org/page/22117/action/1>

⁴Google Business Review of the NMB. Accessed November 1, 2023.

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⁵Avocado Nutrition Center. Research Grant Program. n.d. Accessed November 1, 2023.

<https://research.loveonetoday.com/research-grant-program/>

⁶PETA. Victory! Global Food Industry Ditches Deadly Animal Tests—See the List. n.d. Accessed

November 1, 2023. <https://www.peta.org/features/victories-food-drink-companies-refuse-animal-tests/>



April 10, 2024

Albert Perez
Chair
National Mango Board

Dear Mr. Perez:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—to inform you that today we're launching a new public campaign¹ and video² concerning the National Mango Board's (NMB) support of cruel and deadly tests on animals. We will promote these materials to consumers and the media, and we're preparing other initiatives at the grassroots and policy levels, in an effort to prohibit all such NMB-supported animal experiments³ we've detailed in our prior letters to you.

We urge the NMB to adopt a public policy against animal testing, as the Hass Avocado Board⁴ and dozens of other food and beverage companies⁵ have already done. Our suggested language is: “*The National Mango Board does not conduct, fund, or commission tests on animals unless explicitly required by law.*”

We're amenable to meeting with you to quickly resolve this issue. You can contact me directly at FrancesC@peta.org. Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Frances Cheng, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department

¹ PETA. Animals Mutilated for Mangoes: Tell the National Mango Board to End Cruel Tests. n.d. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/Mango>

² PETA. The National Mango Board's Animal Tests Are Rotten to the Core. April 1, 2024. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTwQ79qLdmE>

³ PETA. Animal Experiments Funded by the Research and Promotion Boards. n.d. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Animal-Experiments-Funded-by-the-Research-and-Promotion-Boards.pdf>

⁴ LOVE ONE TODAY. Research Opportunities. n.d. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://research.loveonetoday.com/research-opportunities/>

⁵ PETA. Victory! Global Food Industry Ditches Deadly Animal Tests—See the List. n.d. Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/features/victories-food-drink-companies-refuse-animal-tests/>

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July 16, 2024

Albert Perez
Chair
National Mango Board

Dear Mr. Perez:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide. **We urge the National Mango Board (NMB) to establish a policy banning the conducting, funding, and commissioning of tests on animals unless explicitly required by law.**

In the accompanying package, you'll find a mug featuring a slogan stating "Mice Are Nice," and an accompanying empathy for animals kit that includes an empathy booklet, animal fact notecards, and a copy of PETA president Ingrid E. Newkirk's book titled *Animalkind*. We'd like you to consider that every animal is someone, and that mice and all animals are living, feeling beings who deserve our consideration and protection.

As we've previously informed you, the NMB has funded cruel, deadly, and wasteful tests on animals to make irrelevant claims about the fruit's benefits to human health. These experiments involve force-feeding, slicing open and killing animals and they're not required by law. You have indicated that the NMB hasn't *funded* animal tests for about ten years, but the question is will funding of such tests resume later? We urge the NMB to ban animal testing by establishing a comprehensive public policy. Again, our suggested public policy language is: "*The National Mango Board does not conduct, fund, or commission tests on animals unless explicitly required by law.*"

We're amenable to meeting with you to quickly resolve this issue. You can contact me directly at FrancesC@peta.org. Thank you, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Frances Cheng, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist, International Laboratory Methods
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