



December 1, 2020

Nathan Herschler, Executive Director
Rise for Animals
333 Washington Street, Suite 850
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Mr. Herschler:

Thank you for reaching out to me by sending your letter which I received on November 24, 2020. Your letter raises concerns about the welfare of nonhuman primates at the Oregon National Primate Research Center (ONPRC) hosted by the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). I assure you that NIH takes animal welfare concerns very seriously and is committed to protecting the well-being and health of all NIH-supported animals.

The incident detailed in your letter was reported to the Animal Care, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS/USDA) and the Division of Compliance Oversight within the NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) within 24-hours after it occurred. These agency offices are charged with responding to incidents of this nature and have the appropriate expertise and oversight to provide an external review and evaluation. These agencies will perform a thorough investigation of the causes for the incident as well as impose potential mitigation strategies to prevent similar incidents. ONPRC/OHSU also reached out to the Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP) within a day of the incident to report the initial findings and their plans to address the situation. Immediate responses included stoppage of all automated cage washer activities throughout the campus and implementation of procedures for hand sanitizing all cages with monitoring for the effectiveness of sanitization. The Institutional Animal Care Committee (IACUC) for OHSU appointed a subcommittee to investigate the incident. Mitigation plans were devised and enacted requiring a two-person verification procedure to allow a slow restart of automated cage washer operations. The two-person verification procedure remains in effect. The IACUC investigation revealed that the technician did not follow the standard operating procedure. Additional oversight of training and supervision were identified as needed. The training programs at the ONPRC were evaluated by the OHSU and have been revised to include a formal proficiency evaluation. The effectiveness of training by individual certified trainers is also under review.

ORIP provides critical infrastructure for biomedical researchers by supporting the development and maintenance of animal models, including nonhuman primates, and related resources, including alternative models and non-animal research methods. ORIP will continue to invest in animal and related resources that optimize and enhance the scientific rigor, transparency, and experimental reproducibility of biomedical research while ensuring the highest possible level of animal care and model quality.

I also want to point out that NIH funds a wide array of research under its mission to support science in pursuit of knowledge about the biology and behavior of living systems and to apply that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce illness and disability. To be successful in this endeavor, researchers rely on a variety of resources and technologies to answer complex biological questions. Research with animal species, including nonhuman primates, remains critical for modeling human physiology and this research is essential for developing new prevention strategies, treatments, and cures for disease. For example, investigators around the world are conducting ground-breaking research on pathology, treatment, and vaccines for the COVID-19 pandemic using nonhuman primate models. NIH also supports the development of non-animal models, or “alternatives” to complement biomedical research studies conducted with animals. However, it is critical to emphasize the on-going need for the use of animals, including nonhuman primates, in biomedical research to meet NIH’s mission of improving public health.

Thank you for your continued interest in NIH research.

Sincerely,

**Franziska B.
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Franziska Grieder, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Director, Office of Research Infrastructure
Programs, Division of Program Coordination,
Planning, and Strategic Initiatives