



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

FOR US POSTAL SERVICE DELIVERY:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500, MSC 6910  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-6910  
Home Page: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>

FOR EXPRESS MAIL:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817  
Telephone: (301) 496-7163  
Facsimile: (301) 480-3387

September 14, 2021

Re: Animal Welfare Assurance  
A3347-01 [OLAW Case 3A)

Dr. Emmanuel Giannelis,  
Vice Provost for Life Sciences  
Cornell University  
(b) (4) Day Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14850

Dear Dr. Giannelis,

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) acknowledges receipt of your July 13, 2021 letter reporting an adverse event at Cornell University. According to the information provided, OLAW understands that on April 17, 2021, to address study specific aims mice from commercial vendors were exposed to material from pet-shop mice including bedding, fecal gavage, and hair swabs to allow for animals to be exposed to a wide range of microbes. Post-exposure to material, an unusually high morbidity consisting of eight mice occurred. Mice were monitored daily and in-depth health checks were performed twice weekly following exposure to material. Animals were provided subcutaneous fluids, wet diet, hydro-diet and hydro-gel however animals continued to decline and therefore were euthanized. Necropsy revealed the most likely cause of morbidity was fulminant bacteria/sepsis. The studies were supported by PHS funding.

As a corrective measure, the lab will continue all interventions as previously provided including additional monitoring of animals performed by facility staff. If severe illness arises in exposed animals, it occurs two weeks post-exposure and therefore lab personnel will monitor the health of animals from 14-21 days post-exposure.

OLAW appreciates the prompt consideration of this matter by Cornell University which is consistent with the philosophy of institutional self-regulation. Based on the information provided, OLAW is satisfied that appropriate steps have been taken to investigate this incident and to attempt to prevent recurrence. We appreciate being informed of this matter and please contact us with any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Nicole L. Lukovsky-  
akhsanov -S

Digitally signed by Nicole L.  
Lukovsky-akhsanov -S  
Date: 2021.09.14 10:57:12  
-04'00'

Nicole Lukovsky-Akhsanov, DVM, MPH, DACLAM  
Division of Compliance Oversight  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare

CC: IACUC contact



**Cornell University**  
**Office of**  
**Research Integrity and Assurance**

395 Pine Tree Road, Suite 320  
 Ithaca, NY 14850  
 Phone: 607-255-2214  
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July 13, 2021

Axel Wolff, MS, DVM, DACLAM  
 Deputy Director, Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
 National Institutes of Health  
 6700B Rockledge Drive, Suite 2500, MSC 6910  
 Bethesda, MD 20892

Animal Welfare Assurance Number: D16-00225 (A3347-01) Cornell University – Ithaca  
 PHS Grant or Contract Number: NIH R01A1142867

Dear Dr. Wolff:

As Institutional Official for Cornell University's animal care and use program, I am reporting an adverse event that occurred under our General Assurance. This incident involved eight mice and occurred on April 17, 2021. This issue was reported to the IACUC at the May 20, 2021 meeting, and the IACUC agreed that the corrective actions taken were appropriate.

**Explanation of the situation:**

To address questions about how the microbial environment impacts immune development, female lab mice from commercial vendors were exposed to material from pet-shop mice (bedding, fecal gavage, hair swabs), so that they could become infected with a wider range of microbes. After exposure, the lab observed an unusually high amount of morbidity (8 mice), which they attributed to a more 'potent' batch of pet-shop mice. Mice were monitored daily and in-depth health checks were performed twice weekly following exposure to pet shop mice. This group of mice appeared sicker than usual and were given subcutaneous fluids and provided with wet food. When the health of the mice continued to decline, Center for Animal Resources and Education (CARE) veterinary staff provided additional supportive care (e.g. hydro-diet and hydro-gel to provide an extra source of nutrients and hydration for the mice). When it was clear that supportive care was not working, the mice were euthanized and necropsy examinations including histology were performed to determine the cause of morbidity.

**Action taken by the institution:**

The necropsy suggested that the most likely cause of morbidity was fulminant bacteremia/sepsis, which was observed in the esophagus, liver, lungs, intestine. To prevent morbidity in the future, the lab will continue all interventions stated above as well as having additional checks performed by the facility staff. Moreover, if severe illness does arise in the lab mice exposed to pet shop material, it typically manifests 2 weeks after the initial exposure, so lab personnel will now monitor the health of the mice daily from 14-21 days post-exposure.

If you have any questions concerning this adverse event that occurred under our General Assurance, please contact Christine Bellezza, Director of Research Assurance in the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at [cab37@cornell.edu](mailto:cab37@cornell.edu).

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Emmanuel Giannelis  
 Vice President for Research and Innovation

cc:

(b) (6)

C. Bellezza  
 AAALAC International

## Wolff, Axel (NIH/OD) [E]

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**From:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Sent:** Monday, July 19, 2021 8:02 AM  
**To:** Christine A. Bellezza  
**Cc:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD)  
**Subject:** RE: Cornell University Report of Noncompliance

Thank you for these reports, Dr. Bellezza. We will send responses soon.

Axel Wolff, M.S., D.V.M.  
Deputy Director, OLAW

**From:** Christine A. Bellezza <cab37@cornell.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 14, 2021 9:55 AM  
**To:** OLAW Division of Compliance Oversight (NIH/OD) <olawdco@od.nih.gov>  
**Cc:** (b) (6) Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation <vp\_research@cornell.edu>; gborkowski@aaalac.org  
**Subject:** Cornell University Report of Noncompliance

Dear Dr. Wolff,

Please see the attached reports from Cornell University's Vice Provost for Research, Dr. Emmanuel Giannelis, describing adverse events that occurred under our General Assurance. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Chris

Christine A. Bellezza, DVM  
Director of Research Assurance  
Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (ORIA)  
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