



Stop Animal Exploitation NOW!

Robert M. Gibbens, D.V.M., Director,
Animal Welfare Operations. USDA-APHIS-Animal Care.
Via e-mail: robert.m.gibbens@usda.gov
animalcare@usda.gov

6/21/20

Dr. Gibbens,

I am writing to you today to file an Official Complaint against Texas Tech University (74-R-0108 & 74-R-0050), for what are extremely clear violations of the Animal Welfare Act which resulted in the deaths of multiple animals.

I am in possession of correspondence sent to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare by Texas Tech University. This correspondence discusses the deaths of four regulated animals. The first incident discussed in the correspondence (dated 1/24/20) states:

"On 9/11/2019 research personnel initiated oral gavage challenge on pigs. Soon thereafter the pig exhibited agonal breathing. The pig was provided oxygen, but it did not recover. Immediately upon observance of agonal breathing, University veterinarians were contacted regarding the incident, and the attending vet (AV) went to the facility to observe the pig. The AV observed a second pig undergo the gavage procedure, and similar agonal breathing occurred. Once again, the pig was put on oxygen with no improvement, it was euthanized by CO2. It was determined that both pigs aspirated the experimental material which resulted in agonal breathing."

These fatal incidents would clearly violate Sec. 2.38 Misc (f)(1) Animal Handling: Handling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort.

Also, laboratory staff should be capable of performing oral gavage on an animal without causing death. Therefore, these incidents would also violate Sec. 2.32 Personnel Qualifications.

The correspondence continues:

"On 12/17/2019 research personnel performed an oral gavage challenge on pigs. Once in the esophagus they slowly pushed 20g peanut butter flour in 65 ml volume at 5ml increments to observe the pig swallowing and breathing before pushing more volume. . . . Immediately after gavage, the pigs were lethargic, which is part of the expected outcome to having an allergic response to the peanut. Approximately eight hours post procedure, all pigs were rechecked. One pig was found to have open mouth breathing and was cyanotic (possible symptoms of anaphylaxis). The clinical veterinarian was called and consulted on treatment. The pig was treated with 0.1cc epinephrine in case it was the beginning of anaphylaxis, and 1cc dexamethasone. Color came back immediately and breathing slightly improved but did not completely return to normal. On 12/18/2019 at 8:30 am the pig was found dead. The pig was sent to a diagnostic lab for diagnostic testing. Two other pigs

were also identified on the morning of 12/18/2019 as having increased respiratory rate and lethargy, and were treated with 1cc dexamethasone and breathing improved. Diagnostics on the first pig were received late on 12/19/2019 indicating that the esophagus had been perforated and a foreign substance was within the thoracic cavity. On 12/20/2019, one of the two additional pigs' increased respiration rate returned and the clinical vet decided to euthanize and necropsy. Results showed the same complications reported from diagnostics."

These fatal incidents would also clearly violate Sec. 2.38 Misc (f)(1) Animal Handling: Handling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort and Sec. 2.32 Personnel Qualifications for precisely the same reasons as the incidents mentioned above.

Texas Tech University staff seem to be uniquely unqualified, having killed four animals during two separate sessions of oral gavage, a basic research procedure.

Since Texas Tech University has now killed four animals through negligence in approximately three months, your office must initiate a full investigation of this facility, and at the conclusion of the investigation Texas Tech University must receive the maximum penalty of \$10,000 per infraction/per animal.

I know that your office considers major violations of the Animal Welfare Act to be very serious in nature, especially when these violations kill or seriously injure animals. Since Texas Tech University has committed animal welfare violations which have led to four animal deaths, I must insist that you take the most severe action allowable under the Animal Welfare Act and immediately begin the process of issuing the maximum fine allowable against Texas Tech University at the completion of your investigation -- \$10,000 per infraction/per animal.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future about the fate of this facility.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T.

Michael A. Budkie, A.H.T.,
Executive Director, SAEN

Attachments: 1 NIH Non-Compliance Report

MEMORANDUM

January 24, 2020

To: AAALAC, OLAW

From: Dr. Joseph Heppert, IO

CC: TTU IACUC;

(b) (6)

RE: Unexpected Deaths for Protocol 18007-01

This memo is to report unexpected deaths on protocol 18007-01 at Texas Tech University.

On 9/11/2019 research personnel initiated oral gavage challenge on pigs. Soon thereafter the pig exhibited agonal breathing. The pig was provided oxygen, but it did not recover. Immediately upon observance of agonal breathing, University veterinarians were contacted regarding the incident, and the Attending Vet (AV) went to the facility to observe the pig. The AV observed a second pig undergo the gavage procedure, and similar agonal breathing occurred. Once again, the pig was put on oxygen with no improvement, it was euthanized by CO₂. It was determined that both pigs aspirated the experimental material which resulted in agonal breathing. The AV conducted on-the-spot retraining. The AV also discussed methods to ensure the tubing was in the esophagus and not the trachea. These steps were followed, and the succeeding pigs were gavaged without incident.

On 12/17/2019 research personnel performed an oral gavage challenge on pigs. Once in the esophagus they slowly pushed 20g peanut flour in 65ml volume at 5ml increments to observe the pig swallowing and breathing before pushing more volume. The clinical vet through post approval monitoring observed the gavage procedure and did not note any technical deficiencies. Immediately after gavage, the pigs were lethargic, which is part of the expected outcome to having an allergic response to the peanut. Approximately eight hours post procedure, all pigs were rechecked. One pig was found to have open mouth breathing and was cyanotic (possible symptoms of anaphylaxis). The clinical veterinarian was called and consulted on treatment. The pig was treated with 0.1cc Epinephrine in case it was the beginning of anaphylaxis, and 1cc dexamethasone. Color came back immediately and breathing slightly improved but did not completely return to normal. On 12/18/2019 at 8:30 A.M. the pig was found dead. The pig was sent to a diagnostic lab for diagnostics testing. Two other pigs were also identified on the morning of 12/18/2019 as having increased respiratory rate and lethargy,

and were treated with 1cc dexamethasone and breathing improved. Diagnostics on the first pig were received late on 12/19/2019 indicating that the esophagus had been perforated and a foreign substance was within the thoracic cavity. On 12/20/2019, one of the two additional pigs' increased respiration rate returned and the clinical vet decided to euthanize and necropsy. Results showed the same complications reported from diagnostics. The third pig recovered without incident.

The AV sent an email to the PI and appropriate personnel on 12/20/2019 ceasing oral gavage activity on protocol 18007-01 since this was a recurring incident. The AV recommended the following:

1. Concentrate the peanut allergen and find another way to administer orally, i.e. in a palatable treat, capsule or bolus
2. Different method of administration, i.e. IP injection
3. If oral gavage must be done, decrease the volume and viscosity of the substance. Find a more appropriate gavage tube and use an oral gag.

Personnel are currently looking into tubing options, or other delivery methods for pigs to voluntarily consume the peanut. Additionally, they will investigate other ways to change the method of delivery or decrease the volume and viscosity of the substance gavaged.