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Lovelace Lab in Albuquerque Targeted for Animal Abuse, Endangering Public, Violating Law; Watchdog Says Feds 'Must Make an Example' of LRRRI '

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – A national watchdog group today said it's urging federal regulators to heavily penalize Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute here for animal abuse and endangering the public – the controversial laboratory has been the subject of an Open Case at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture since at least March of 2016.

SAEN, an Ohio-based national watchdog nonprofit that investigates animal abuse and illegal activities in U.S. research facilities, said Lovelace (LRRRI) has a history of breaking government regulations – it has racked up more violations since 2015 than five other laboratories/breeders/dealers that the USDA has, in fact, fined about \$270,00.

LRRRI, said SAEN, has recorded 13 violations in less than two years, but also collected 10 violations in 2014 and six in 2013 – 29 violations in four years involving the abuse and deaths of monkeys, dogs and rabbits.

"What does it take for the USDA to issue an enforcement action? Many of these violations are repeat violations, including the aforementioned veterinary care issues. There have been multiple animal handling violations," said Michael Budkie, AHT, SAEN executive director, in his letter to the USDA.

In addition to animal abuse, Budkie has concern for the public in the surrounding Albuquerque area.

"Multiple animals have died, multiple primates have escaped, which is clearly a major concern for a facility that does experiments involving very dangerous diseases and potential biological weapons," Budkie added.

"Very soon, the five year statute of limitations will begin to become a factor, because some of Lovelace's most heinous violations relevant to multiple animal deaths and injuries date back to 2014. It would constitute negligence on the part of the USDA if the violations could no longer be considered in penalties assigned to this long-term criminal lab," said Budkie in his USDA complaint letter.

"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 the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute has a long history of animal abuse which has led to multiple animal deaths and/or injuries, I must insist that you take the most severe action allowable under the Animal Welfare Act... I am certain that the penalty could be in the high six-figure range.

"If your office continues to consider enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act a priority, you must take serious action against this lab. You must make an example of Lovelace. The longer that this lab goes without a meaningful penalty, the less seriously the entire research industry will take the Animal Welfare Act," said Budkie to the USDA.