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Universities Cited for AWA Violations; One Paid Fine

More than 20 universities or research institutions, including Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and the University of Texas (UT) Austin, received a warning from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) last year for alleged violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). A warning “is not to be construed as a final agency action, or as an adjudicated finding of a violation,” but indicates that formal action could occur in the future if an alleged violation is repeated, the website states. There was one such case in the last two years. In a change from the past, violation notices, posted online, contain almost no details. For example, on June 4, Vanderbilt was accused of an AWA “handling” violation occurring on April 27. Animals are to be handled “expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavioral stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort,” the warning letter states.

APHIS informed JHU on July 29 that on June 17 it had allegedly violated general requirements related to primary enclosures, which APHIS said “must be constructed and maintained so that they...Protected the nonhuman primate from injury.” There is no mention of type of animals involved. The agency told UT on June 22 that it had failed to ensure “all scientists, research technicians, animal technicians, and other personnel involved in animal care, treatment, and use are qualified to perform their duties,” an alleged violation that occurred on May 20. APHIS’s online database of enforcement actions, which seems to only go back to 2020, includes one citation and penalty for a research institution—a notice that provides more details. On April 5, 2020, APHIS imposed a penalty of \$74,000 on the University of Wisconsin-Madison, stemming from 23 violations from 2015 to 2019 related mostly to nonhuman primates. Specifically, it was cited for problems with handling, watering, structures, grouping, feeding and facilities; some incidents involved mice and squirrels. According to APHIS, one incident involved a “younger” nonhuman primate who died in December 2015, four days after being severely attacked by a “cagemate.” The nonhuman primate was returned to the same enclosure following medical treatment.

[Link to all AWA enforcement actions for 2021](#)

[Link to University of Wisconsin notice](#)

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