



Stop Animal Exploitation NOW!

Bernadette Juarez, Deputy Administrator,
Animal Care, USDA/APHIS/AC

8/13/26

Via email: bernadette.r.juarez@usda.gov ; AC.Complaints@usda.gov

Deputy Administrator Juarez,

I am writing to you today to file a Federal Complaint against Utah State University, (USU 87-R-0002) and their incompetent staff for serious violations of the Animal Welfare Act discussed in the report from a filed USDA inspection.

The report from the failed USU inspection dated 7/7/26 discusses the improper deaths of over 80 animals: ***“82 naked mole rats were euthanized by a method not on the approved protocol between 9/26/2025 and 10/3/2025. The naked mole rats were euthanized by CO2 instead of the injectable euthanasia method approved in the protocol. Naked mole rats are a hypoxia tolerant species, and the use of CO2 required a prolonged exposure of ~40 minutes to achieve death.”***

Subjecting animals to over 40 minutes of asphyxiation is horrific and only took place because USU staff failed to follow their own protocol. It is not surprising that this is a CRITICAL violation because these 82 animals suffered unnecessarily because of this failure.

The report from this failed inspection reveals the unnecessary death of a rabbit. The report states: ***“A rabbit died during an anesthetic procedure on 12/11/2025. The animal’s depth of anesthesia had become too light and the anesthetic gas level was increased. The level was not reduced once a deeper plane of anesthesia was achieved and the animal subsequently died during the procedure and was not able to be resuscitated.”***

This fatal violation of ***Sec. 2.33 Attending veterinarian and adequate veterinary care*** was entirely unnecessary. If the rabbit had been anesthetized adequately in the first place or, the anesthetic level had been returned to a lower level after the deeper level of anesthesia was achieved, the rabbit would have survived the procedure.

Both of these violations — one about bungled euthanasia of over eighty animals, and a second about botched anesthesia for a rabbit clearly demonstrate that Utah State University lab workers are incompetent. It is unfortunate that the USDA cannot fire inept staff.

Both of these incidents could have also been cited under ***Sec. 2.32 Personnel Qualifications***.

Therefore, due to the multiple failures of Utah State University laboratory staff this facility must be the target of a full USDA/APHIS investigation. At the conclusion of the investigation, Utah State University must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. USDA/APHIS must levy the maximum fine against USU, \$12,722 per infraction, per animal. The maximum penalty for these two violations which led to the deaths of could be as high as \$1,055,926.

I will look forward to a response within five business days.

Sincerely,

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

Attachments: 1 Utah State University report from a Failed USDA Inspection Report



Inspection Report

Utah State University
V.P. FOR RESEARCH/1450 OLD MAIN HILL
LOGAN, UT 84322

Customer ID: 2
Certificate: 87-R-0002
Site: 001
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Type: ROUTINE INSPECTION
Date: 07-JUL-2026

2.31(c)(7) Critical

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

82 naked mole rats were euthanized by a method not on the approved protocol between 9/26/2025 and 10/3/2025. The naked mole rats were euthanized by CO2 instead of the injectable euthanasia method approved in the protocol. Naked mole rats are a hypoxia tolerant species, and the use of CO2 required a prolonged exposure of ~40 minutes to achieve death.

Failure to follow the approved protocol and making unapproved changes does not allow the IACUC to review these changes as required and ensure the animals involved do not experience negative impacts to their health and welfare. The IACUC must ensure that all significant changes regarding the care and use of animals in ongoing activities including euthanasia are reviewed and approved prior to implementation.

Corrective action was implemented prior to this inspection.
To be corrected from this day forward, July 7, 2026

2.33(b)(4) Critical

Attending veterinarian and adequate veterinary care.

A rabbit died during an anesthetic procedure on 12/11/2025. The animal's depth of anesthesia had become too light and the anesthetic gas level was increased. The level was not reduced once a deeper plane of anesthesia was achieved and the animal subsequently died during the procedure and was not able to be resuscitated.

Failure to appropriately monitor patients and adjust anesthetic levels during a procedure can lead to injury or death of the patient.

Each research facility must establish and maintain programs of adequate veterinary care that provide adequate guidance to personnel involved in the care and use of animals regarding handling, immobilization, anesthesia, analgesia, tranquilization, and euthanasia.

Corrective action was implemented prior to this inspection.
To be corrected from this day forward, July 7, 2026

This inspection and exit interview were conducted with facility representative.

Prepared By: ANN GOPLEN

USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

Date:
14-JUL-2026

Title: VETERINARY MEDICAL
OFFICER

Received by Title: Attending Veterinarian

Date:
14-JUL-2026



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

AGOPLEN
INS-0001617878

Inspection Report

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USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

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Title: VETERINARY MEDICAL
OFFICER

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