

From: [APHIS-AC Complaints](#)
To: [Dr. Alka Chandna](#)
Subject: RE: [External Email]Concerns from PETA re the sourcing and treatment of piglets at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School INQ-0000071124 and INQ-0000071129
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2026 3:52:46 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

Dear Dr. Chandna,

Thank you for your correspondence dated **October 19, 2026**. We are reviewing your concerns and assigned tracking numbers INQ-0000071124 (UMass) and INQ-0000071129 (Earle M. Parsons & Sons, Inc.).

Please allow us enough time (30 to 60 days) to thoroughly look into your concerns. You may submit a request to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office to obtain any publicly available information regarding our review. FOIA Requests can be submitted three ways:

1. Web Request Form: <https://securefoia.usda.gov/App/Home.aspx>
2. Fax: 301-734-5941
3. US Mail:

USDA- APHIS- FOIA
4700 River Road, Unit 50
Riverdale, MD 20737

Should you have any questions regarding the APHIS FOIA process or need assistance using the Web Request Form **please contact the APHIS FOIA office at 301-851-4102**.

Animal Care is a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that directs activities to ensure compliance with and enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act. Animal Care establishes standards of humane treatment for regulated animals and monitors and achieves compliance through inspections, enforcement, education, and cooperative efforts under the Acts.

Please be assured that we will look into your concern(s) and take appropriate action(s).

Thank you for your interest into the humane treatment of these animals.

Sincerely,

USDA APHIS Animal Care
Program Support Unit D6

AC.Complaints@usda.gov



Animal Plant Health Inspection Service

2150 Centre Ave. Bldg. B, Mailstop 3W11, Fort Collins, CO, 80526 p: (970) 494-7478

Join the Animal Care Stakeholder Registry and receive emails on topics of interest

We are happy to announce that we have introduced an online self-service tool to assist you in determining the appropriate application to complete as required under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

From: Dr. Alka Chandna <AlkaC@peta.org>

Sent: Monday, October 19, 2026 7:01 AM

To: Juarez, Bernadette - MRP-APHIS <bernadette.r.juarez@usda.gov>; APHIS-AC Complaints <AC.Complaints@usda.gov>

Subject: [External Email]Concerns from PETA re the sourcing and treatment of piglets at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School

[External Email]

If this message comes from an **unexpected sender** or references a **vague/unexpected topic**;

Use caution before clicking links or opening attachments.

Please send any concerns or suspicious messages to: Spam.Abuse@usda.gov

October 19, 2026

Bernadette Juarez
Deputy Administrator
Animal Care
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Via e-mail

Dear Ms. Juarez:

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), I am writing to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) investigate potential violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and its implementing regulations concerning two young male Yorkshire pigs used in invasive cardiac experiments conducted by John Kevin Donahue at the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School (UMass Chan; USDA Certificate No. 14-R-0035).

According to documents obtained by PETA, two piglets—identified as 717^[1] and 796^[2]—were both found dead in their enclosures after being used in Donahue’s protocols. The circumstances surrounding their deaths, described below, raise questions about postoperative monitoring, timely veterinary intervention, and the adequacy and implementation of humane endpoints under experimental protocols 202200028 and 202100063.

We also request an investigation into the licensing status of Earle M. Parsons & Sons, Inc., identified as the supplier of pig 796 and two other pigs.^[3] This facility does not appear in the Animal Care Inspection Service database maintained by the USDA.

Pig 717

Pig 717 weighed 28 kilograms on November 20, 2023, and was described as timid and, in a subsequent entry, very skittish. On December 6, 2023, he was sedated and moved to the operating room for a procedure to induce a heart attack and implant a battery-powered defibrillator under protocol 202200028. A balloon was inflated to block a blood vessel for approximately 2.5 hours.

Following the surgery, approximately 3–4 milliliters of rectal bleeding were observed when a thermometer was removed. That evening, the piglet was

described as sluggish. He was found dead in his concrete kennel later that evening and sent for necropsy.

It is unclear whether a veterinarian assessed Pig 717’s bleeding and sluggishness, what monitoring occurred after he was returned to his enclosure, and whether any deterioration was promptly recognized and treated. It is also unclear whether Donahue’s protocol specified adequate, well-defined humane endpoints to limit pain and distress, and whether UMass Chan’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) adequately evaluated those safeguards.

Pig 796

Pig 796 was just 10 weeks old and weighed 28 kilograms when he was shipped to UMass Chan in December 2024. Described as timid in an examination log, he was caged alone. On January 9, 2025, at 12 weeks old, he was sedated and taken to surgery under protocol 202100063. Experimenters cut through his breastbone and the sac surrounding his heart to expose the beating organ, “painted” experimental gene therapies onto its surface, and implanted a pacemaker beneath his skin.

The following day, he was found dead in his enclosure. His death was attributed provisionally to cardiac arrest following apparent displacement of a pacemaker lead from the atrium into the ventricles, causing ventricular fibrillation.

It is unclear whether experimenters properly positioned the pacemaker and its leads and verified their function during implantation, or whether postoperative monitoring and staffing were adequate to detect and promptly respond to a life-threatening complication.

Earle M. Parsons & Sons, Inc.

An invoice dated December 30, 2024, documents the shipment of three 10-week-old pigs from Earle M. Parsons & Sons Inc at 140 Mill Valley Road in Hadley, Massachusetts to Donahue’s laboratory at UMass Chan. However, this operation does not appear in the USDA’s ACIS

database and does not appear to be licensed as a dealer authorized to supply experimentation facilities.

We believe the events described above warrant review for possible violations of federal Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs).

1. Inadequate Veterinary Care and Postoperative Monitoring

Section 2.33(b) of the AWRs mandates that “[e]ach research facility shall establish and maintain programs of adequate veterinary care that include: (1) the availability of appropriate facilities, personnel, equipment, and services ...; (2) the use of appropriate methods to prevent, control, diagnose, and treat diseases and injuries ...; (3) ... a mechanism of direct and frequent communication ... so that timely and accurate information on problems of animal health, behavior, and well-being is conveyed to the attending veterinarian; (4) guidance to principal investigators and other personnel involved in the care and use of animals regarding handling, immobilization, anesthesia, analgesia, tranquilization, and euthanasia; and (5) adequate pre-procedural and post-procedural care in accordance with current established veterinary medical and nursing procedures.”

However, the unexpected deaths of Pigs 717 and 796 raise serious concerns about whether UMass Chan provided adequate postoperative monitoring and timely veterinary intervention. We urge the USDA to determine whether deficiencies in care contributed to either pig’s death or allowed avoidable pain and distress to go unaddressed.

2. IACUC Review, Protocol Detail, and Humane Endpoints

Section 2.31(d) of the AWRs stipulates a set of requirements for the IACUC’s review of proposed use of animals, including that “procedures involving animals will avoid or minimize discomfort, distress, and pain to the animals” [2.31(d)(1)(i)]; “animals [who] would otherwise experience severe or chronic pain or distress that cannot be relieved will be painlessly euthanized at the end of the procedure or, if appropriate, during the procedure” [2.31(d)(1)(v)]; “medical care for animals will be available and provided as necessary by a qualified veterinarian” [2.31(d)(1)(vii)]; and “activities that involve surgery include appropriate provision for pre-operative and post-operative care of the animals in accordance with established veterinary medical and nursing practices” [2.31(d)(1)(ix)].

We urge the USDA to determine whether UMass Chan’s IACUC approved protocols with inadequate postoperative care requirements or humane endpoints, whether personnel failed to implement approved safeguards, or both.

3. Unlicensed Supplier

Section 2.1(a)(1) of the AWRs requires dealers to hold a valid license unless an exemption applies. PETA has not located Earle M. Parsons & Sons, Inc. in USDA’s public database. We request that USDA determine whether the supplier held a valid license at the time of the December 30, 2024, transaction, including under another business name, and, if not, whether an exemption applied or the sale violated federal licensing requirements.

We respectfully request that the USDA investigate the incidents outlined above, determine whether UMass Chan or Earle M. Parsons & Sons, Inc. violated the Animal Welfare Act or its implementing regulations, and, if violations are substantiated, pursue whatever enforcement action the agency deems appropriate.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Alka Chandna, Ph.D.
Vice President
Laboratory Oversight & Special Cases
AlkaC@peta.org | (757) 803-6447

[1] Please see Exhibit 1.

[2] Please see Exhibit 2.

[3] Please see Exhibit 3.

This electronic message contains information generated by the USDA solely for the intended recipients. Any unauthorized interception of this message or the use or disclosure of the information it contains may violate the law and subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.