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Vanderbilt Negligence Leads to Animal Death; Watchdog Calls University 'Career Criminal;' Demands 'Largest Fine Possible' Under Federal Law Be Issued

NASHVILLE, TN – Vanderbilt University has been found by government inspectors to be negligently guilty of the death of at least one animals, leading a national research watchdog organization to describe Vanderbilt as a "career criminal" and demanding the government issue the largest fine allowable under the U.S. Animal Welfare Act.

"Clearly the situation at Vanderbilt is very serious..this lab has a long-term pattern of meaningful violations which seriously impact the health, well-being, and the very lives of the animals in the facility...I insist that you take the most severe action allowable under the Animal Welfare Act and immediately begin the process of issuing the largest fine allowable under the Animal Welfare Act against Vanderbilt University," said Michael Budkie, executive director of the Cincinnati-based SAEN in a letter to the USDA office in Raleigh, NC.

SAEN said Vanderbilt was cited for multiple violations of federal law in September, one of which was directly tied to the suffocation of a pig.

Vanderbilt was also cited in the failure to properly anesthetize a monkey used in research, and had several serious violations of the Animal Welfare Act in 2012, including a traumatic injury which led to the death of a primate, depriving animals of water, and more violations under the code for the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee.

Vanderbilt's 2011 inspection report also showed multiple non-compliances under the code sections for the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee, as well as Animal Handling. Several of these non-compliances were also relevant to depriving animals of water. Finally, said Budkie in his letter to the USDA, Vanderbilt was fined in 2010 for earlier violations of the Animal Welfare Act which were relevant to the deaths of six animals.

"Obviously, Vanderbilt is a repeat offender, bordering on being a career criminal in terms of non-compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. The treatment of animals at Vanderbilt illustrates attitudes of carelessness and negligence that must be punished so that meaningful changes can be made," said Budkie.