

The Honorable Robert Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Ending HHS-Supported Dog Experiments

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

As scientists and healthcare providers, we ask that you use your authority to end the use of dogs in testing and research funded or overseen by the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).

More than 41,000 dogs were held or used in U.S. labs in 2025.¹ The National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded many of the experiments in which those animals were used, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has long encouraged the use of dogs for preclinical drug testing. In other words, HHS agencies are the country's single biggest driver of dog experiments. Yet dogs are unnecessary for disease research and drug testing, and their use in those fields is wasting taxpayer money and setting back scientific discoveries.

Drug testing may be the single biggest purpose for which labs use dogs. But we agree with the recent acting director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, who called for a "fundamental reassessment" of animal testing as the foundation for evaluating drug safety.² She and her co-authors wrote, "Animal studies may fail to predict toxicities that emerge in humans and, conversely, generate misleading safety signals that inappropriately terminate the development of useful therapeutics for humans."²

Substantial scientific evidence has revealed the failures of animal studies, especially dog studies, in predicting human outcomes. A 2020 examination of cancer drugs—71% of which conducted studies in dogs—concluded that "animal toxicity did not show strong correlation with human toxicity."³ Overall, more than 92% of drugs that prove safe and effective in animal studies fail in human trials.^{4,5}

Thankfully, new approach methodologies—including computational models, organoids, and organs-on-chips built from human cell lines—can better predict human responses to drugs. While the FDA embraced those methods in its April 2025 "Roadmap to Reducing Animal Testing in

¹ Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. *Annual report summary* [database online]. US Dept of Agriculture; 2025. Accessed August 16, 2026. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fy2025-research-animal-use-summary.pdf>

² Høeg TB, Kozlowski S, Saber H, Makary MA. Eliminating unnecessary animal testing. *JAMA*. 2026;335(23):2011–2014. doi:10.1001/jama.2026.7074

³ Atkins, JT, George, GC, Hess, K et al. Pre-clinical animal models are poor predictors of human toxicities in phase 1 oncology clinical trials. *Br J Cancer*. 2020;123:1496–1501. doi:10.1038/s41416-020-01033-x

⁴ Biotechnology Innovation Organization. *Clinical development contributing factors 2011–2020*. Biotechnology Innovation Organization; 2021. https://go.bio.org/rs/490-EHZ-999/images/ClinicalDevelopmentSuccessRates2011_2020.pdf

⁵ Marshall LJ, Bailey J, Cassotta M, Herrmann K, Pistollato F. Poor translatability of biomedical research using animals—a narrative review. *ATLA*. 2023;51(2):102-135. doi:10.1177/02611929231157756

Preclinical Safety Studies,”⁶ the agency—and the HHS as a whole—can and must work faster to modernize drug testing and biomedical research.

Similarly, we are encouraged by the NIH’s recent announcements about prioritizing human-based research methods and reducing the use of animals.^{7,8} Yet the agency continues to play a major role in the use of dogs for drug testing and research. NIH-awarded grants fund drug testing studies on dogs and scientifically unnecessary disease experiments that subject dogs to spinal cord injuries, invasive surgeries, eye disorders, cancer, and other ailments.⁹

Americans deserve safe, effective drugs and treatments developed and evaluated using human-specific models. Yet dog experiments funded and supported by the U.S government are failing to make people safer or healthier.

We urge you to take immediate steps to end the use of dogs in testing and research funded or overseen by the Department of Health & Human Services.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

⁶ Food and Drug Administration. *Roadmap to Reducing Animal Testing in Preclinical Safety Studies*. Food and Drug Administration. US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2025. Accessed August 16, 2026. https://www.fda.gov/files/newsroom/published/roadmap_to_reducing_animal_testing_in_preclinical_safety_studies.pdf

⁷ National Institutes of Health. NIH to Prioritize Human-Based Research Technologies. US Dept of Health and Human Services; Published April 29, 2025. Accessed August 16, 2026. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-prioritize-human-based-research-technologies>

⁸ National Institutes of Health. NIH Launches New Office to Advance Human-Based Research and Reduce Animal Use. US Dept of Health and Human Services; Published June 15, 2026. Accessed August 16, 2026. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-launches-new-office-advance-human-based-research-reduce-animal-use>

⁹ National Institutes of Health. *RePORTER* [database online]. US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2026. Accessed August 16, 2026. <https://reporter.nih.gov/>