

August 9, 2005

The Honorable L. Douglas Wilder
Mayor of Richmond
900 E. Broad St., Rm. 201
Richmond, VA

Dear Mayor Wilder,

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has learned that the Philip Morris Research and Technology Center, now under construction in downtown Richmond, will conduct laboratory smoking experiments on animals. We are writing to ask that you pull the city back from this dirty alliance with Philip Morris.

It appears that primates will be used in the new center, as there are rooms labeled “Primate Room 1” and “Primate Room 2” on building plans. This is of particular concern to us given the fact that nonhuman primates are terrified by daily life in laboratories—so much so that their stress indicators jump off the charts because of constant anticipation of the next door opening, which means that people will be yanking them from their tiny cages to do unpleasant or painful things to them.

In order to begin to comprehend the various kinds of torment (and in this case willful abuse) that these animals endure, please take the time to view the enclosed DVD of PETA’s undercover investigation at Covance Laboratories, with which Philip Morris has contracted for product-testing purposes.

Tobacco companies like Philip Morris have conducted experiments on animals for more than 50 years. Because animals do not develop cancer the same way humans do, early experiments such as the infamous “smoking beagles” studies misled the public into believing that smoking was safe, and now Philip Morris intends to experiment on animals to trick the public into believing that smoking cigarettes can be made “safer.” As we all know, there is never going to be a safe cigarette as long as smoking involves the inhalation of smoke.

One recent experiment involved forcing pregnant rhesus monkeys to inhale cigarette smoke through mechanized pumps for more than 100 days in order to expose their fetuses to nicotine. The fetuses were then surgically removed from the monkeys before reaching full term and killed so that their lungs could be dissected and examined. There is no reason to believe that experiments on primates at the new Philip Morris center would not follow a similarly unnecessary and tragic vein.



PETA

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AN INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION DEDICATED
TO PROTECTING
THE RIGHTS OF ALL ANIMALS

In another Philip Morris-sponsored study, published in 2004, rats were forced to inhale cigarette smoke prior to and during mating, gestation, and lactation to determine how cigarette smoke affects their offspring. At the termination of the study, all of the rats were killed. The report concluded that parental smoking has no effect on the offspring's behavioral development or developmental landmarks such as motor activity, learning, and memory, in contrast to clinical studies with children that have reported the opposite.

Mayor Wilder, as governor of Virginia, you made the governor's office smoke-free for the first time and stood up to big tobacco by signing the Virginia Indoor Clean Air Act, and Virginia is a healthier place for it.

We ask you to again take a stand and prevent further suffering at the hands of big tobacco. If people want to continue smoking, despite overwhelming evidence that it is detrimental to their health, it is their legal option to exercise their freedom of choice. But to terrorize, sicken, and kill animals in laboratory smoking experiments to mislead people into believing that smoking can be safe is nothing less than immoral.

We urge you to withdraw the City of Richmond's financial commitment to the project unless Philip Morris agrees that no animal research will take place at the research and technology center. There are numerous alternatives to animal research, and clinical trials and epidemiological studies using volunteer human nicotine addicts would help people and spare the animals. As public-education campaigns, prohibitive pricing, government warnings, and cancer deaths make the public aware of the hazards of smoking, the habit is declining in popularity. Let's make cruel and utterly unnecessary animal experiments history as well.

I look forward to your response regarding this important matter. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 202-244-6503 or via e-mail at ChrisF@peta.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chris Ford".

Chris Ford, Research Associate
Research & Investigations Department