

Testing Cosmetics and Household Products on Animals

Every year, hundreds of thousands of animals suffer and die in unnecessary experiments to test household products, toiletries and cosmetics. Products such as soap, shampoo, washing-up liquid, glue, paint, industrial chemicals and even food additives, are tested on animals by companies motivated by profit.

The law in the UK and in the EU does not say that products have to be tested on animals, only that companies have to ensure that their products are safe for people to use and do not harm the environment.

Cosmetics Tests

Since 1998, the British government has not issued licences for testing cosmetics or their ingredients on animals. And in 2009, the ban extends across Europe. This sounds like great news, but sadly this will not be the end of animal testing for cosmetics. Three types of animal poisoning test will continue until at least 2013: repeated-dose toxicity, reproductive toxicity and toxicokinetics. Currently, no 'alternatives' to these tests have been approved.

Repeated Dose Toxicity

A chemical is given to animals over and over again to see whether it harms them. It may be pumped into their stomachs or injected into them, or the animals may be forced to inhale it. The test can last a few days or several months. At its conclusion, the animals will be killed and their organs studied. At least two different species of animal will be used – one will be a rodent; the other could be, for example, a dog or a monkey.¹

Reproductive Toxicity

Chemicals are forced into animals to see if they harm their reproductive systems or their young. Animals may be poisoned for months or years in order to examine the effects in their offspring. Some animals will be given high doses; others low doses. But all will be killed at the end of the test.

Toxicokinetics

Again, chemicals are given to animals at varying doses and their whole-body reaction is watched to see how they respond. Blood samples are regularly taken to examine the effects of the chemical. This type of test is often used in conjunction with the other two, but none can predict how a human will react to the same chemicals.²



REACH

And this is not the end of the story. There is another European law, which may mean that some cosmetic ingredients will *still* be tested on animals. It is called REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals). Under this law, the European Commission plans to test 30,000 chemicals for their human and environmental safety. Cosmetics were not supposed to be included in this testing programme but, because some chemicals used in cosmetics are used for other purposes, they could also be tested on animals.

Household Product Tests

Most household products in the shops are made by five companies, all of which test on animals: Procter & Gamble, Unilever, SC Johnson, Colgate-Palmolive and Reckitt Benckiser. To keep ahead of their competitors, all of these companies insist on developing 'new' and 'improved' ingredients – and that means more animal testing, more misery and more pain.

Campaigns continue to press for laws to stop the use of animals for household product testing. In the meantime, Marks & Spencer and the Co-op have taken the lead and guarantee that their own-brand products are not animal-tested.

www.animalaid.org.uk • tel: 01732 364546

factfile

1) <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/pharmaceuticals/eudralex/vol-3/pdfs-en/3bs2aen.pdf>
2) <http://www.emea.europa.eu/pdfs/human/ich/038495en.pdf>

Bad Science

The truth is that performing tests on animals does not establish whether products are safe for people to use. Animals are genetically and biochemically different from people. They absorb, metabolise and excrete chemicals differently, and, therefore, animal tests can never predict how a chemical will affect people. For example, bleach causes only mild irritation to rabbits' skin but severe irritation to human skin. Benzene (a common chemical in household items) causes cancer in people, but not in rats or mice.

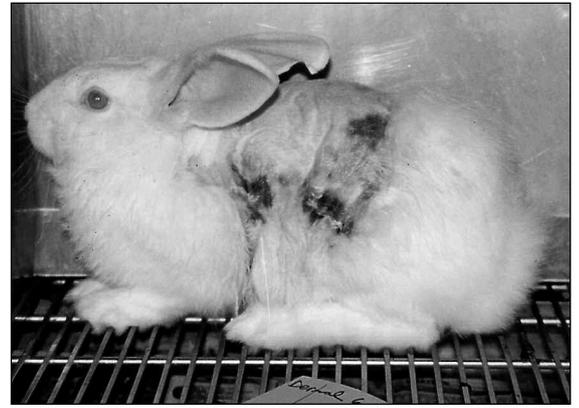
Furthermore, it is virtually impossible to assess in animals the risk of a product causing a slow developing disease in people, as their lifespan is much shorter than our own. Their lives are curtailed even more in laboratory experiments – a typical rodent toxicity test will take on average three months, at the end of which the animal will be killed and the outcome analysed.



Damaging People and the Environment

Nearly all household products contain substances that can cause cancers and other diseases.³ Furthermore, the barrage of antibacterial products marketed to create a germ-free environment could contribute to the development of drug-resistant superbugs. A 2007 study, which looked at 27 previous studies from 1980 to 2006, concluded that the main active ingredient in many antibacterial soaps – triclosan – may cause some bacteria to become resistant to commonly used antibiotics such as Amoxicillin.⁴

Many scientists have also concluded that man-made chemicals are damaging wildlife by causing decreased fertility, decreased hatching success and even gender dysfunction. Although REACH will test thousands of chemicals to assess their impact on people and the environment, the programme will kill millions of animals to do so, and ultimately will not generate reliable information about how substances are damaging people, animals and the environment. Rather than consuming more chemicals, we should be aiming to cut down their use in our daily lives.



The main cruelty-free policies are:

Fixed cut-off date (FCOD):

This means a firm's products or ingredients haven't been tested on animals after a specific date. The further in the past the cut-off date, the more ethical the product.

Five year rolling rule (5YRR):

This means the product does not contain any ingredients that have been tested in the previous five years. However, since a product can take several years to come to market, this policy is only a mild inconvenience to manufacturers, and does little to dissuade them from testing new ingredients on animals, as they know it will not be long before their products can be labelled 'cruelty-free'. Animal Aid does not endorse products developed under a 5YRR.

Beware if the labels says:

'Not tested on animals'

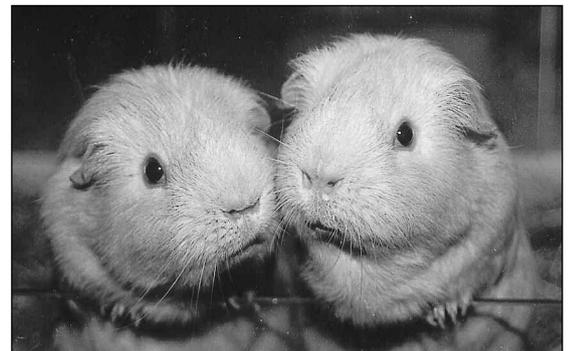
This product may not have been tested on animals, but all of the ingredients may well have been. In fact, most animal testing is for ingredients and not finished products.

'Against animal testing'

This is meaningless unless the company can prove that they stick to a strict non-animal testing policy.

'We don't test our products or ingredients on animals'

Another company may have done so on their behalf.



3) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/apr/02/health.cancer>

4) http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/healthmain.html?in_article_id=475953&in_page_id=1774

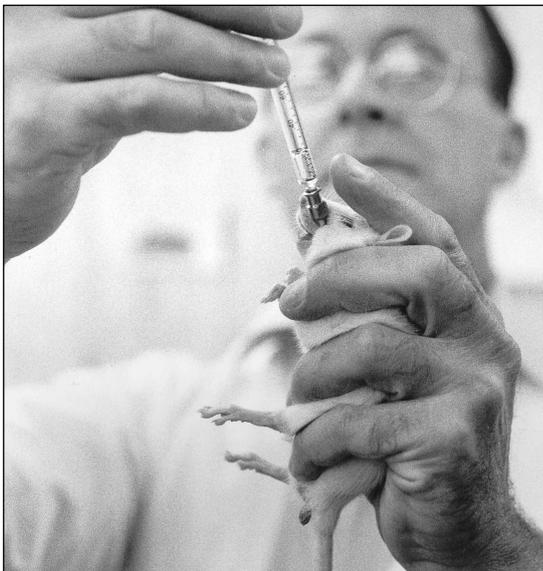
How to be a cruelty-free cleaner

The following companies offer various household cleaning products, all of which implement a fixed cut-off date (FCOD), and contain no animal-derived ingredients:

- **Honesty:** Tel: 01629 814888
www.honestycosmetics.co.uk
Mail order service.
- **Bio D:** Tel: 01482 229950
www.biodegradable.biz/
Available in health food shops. List of outlets on company's website.
- **Clear Spring:** Tel: 0161 724 4016
www.faihinnature.co.uk
Available in health food shops, via mail order and from Animal Aid.
- **Astonish:** Tel: 0113 236 0036
www.astonishcleaners.co.uk
Available in supermarkets, 'pound shops' and via mail order.
- **Co-op** own range products are cruelty-free, but check on the label for animal ingredients.
- **Marks & Spencer** own range products are cruelty-free but check on the label for animal ingredients.

Humane Cosmetics Standard and Household Products Standard

Look out for BUAV's leaping bunny symbol on cosmetics, toiletries and household products, which guarantees that neither the ingredients, nor the finished products, have been tested on animals after a certain fixed cut-off date. It does not guarantee that the products are free from animal ingredients. For an up-to-date list of companies that are allowed to use this symbol, see www.gocrueltyfree.org



Non-toxic alternatives

You could always try making your own household cleaning products. This will save animals, de-toxify your home and save you money! Not just old wives' tales, these tried-n-tested natural recipes really work:

Washing powder: mix 1 cup of finely grated soap, 1 cup of washing soda and 2 tsp of lavender oil.

Fabric conditioner: soak herbs in white wine vinegar. Alternatively, buy a 'laundry ball' e.g. from www.lakelandlimited.co.uk to replace washing powder and conditioner altogether – it really works!

Stain remover: washing soda removes tea, fruit juice and blood. For oil, rub white chalk into the stain before laundering.

Scouring powder: bicarbonate of soda can be used for sinks and baths.

Window cleaner: use a mix of vinegar and water. To avoid smears, rub onto windows using newspaper.

Floor cleaner: washing soda crystals in water.

Oven/microwave cleaner: mix baking soda (bicarbonate of soda) and water to form a paste.

Furniture polish: mix three parts olive oil and one part vinegar, or one part lemon juice and two parts olive oil. Buff with a soft cloth.

Silverware polish: apply bicarbonate of soda paste with a damp sponge or soft cloth.

Air freshener: leave opened box of baking soda (bicarbonate of soda) in the room or add cloves and cinnamon to boiling water.

For clogged drains: pour 1/2 cup baking soda (bicarbonate of soda), then 1/2 cup vinegar down the drain.

NB. Bicarbonate of soda is the same as baking soda. Washing soda is sodium carbonate (it can usually be bought or ordered from supermarkets).