

Fact Sheet: Replacing Animals in Product Safety Testing

The Issue

Each year, millions of animals are used to measure the safety of household and personal care products. These toxicity tests were developed in the early 1900s and have been criticized for their extreme cruelty and inability to provide reliable data that can be extrapolated to humans.

Background

Government regulations require household and personal care products and their ingredients be “safe” for humans, animals and the environment. While the United States does not have a law requiring animal testing for cosmetics and household products, manufacturers are encouraged “to employ whatever testing is appropriate and effective for substantiating the safety of their products.” Currently this may include animal testing.

Certain household products are required to undergo animal testing by the Environmental Protection Agency, for example, if they are labeled as “antibacterial” agents. Likewise, personal care products intended for therapeutic use—such as anti-dandruff shampoos—are considered “drugs” and must comply with drug testing requirements of the Food and Drug Administration, which requires animal testing.

Companies test products on animals for three reasons: safety, efficacy and liability. Many companies that are not specifically required by law to test their products on animals conduct tests in animals to substantiate the *safety* of their products. Drugs intended for human or animal use are additionally tested for *efficacy* (i.e., their effectiveness in treating a condition or disease), and animal testing is a legal requirement. For many companies, animal testing is the simple and logical choice for collecting data that could limit the company’s *liability* to its customers in a lawsuit.

Moreover, an abundance of evidence supports the fact that animal testing does not contribute to consumer safety, nor does it provide information for the effective treatment of injuries that may result from the use or misuse of a product. In fact, testing on animals does not accurately predict an allergic reaction in some humans, and some products that have been found to be safe on animals have caused serious problems when used by humans.

Animal testing does not ensure that products are safe for humans; it is an outdated and cruel practice. Fortunately, many non-animal testing methods are available today.

Companies and government agencies should be encouraged to adopt these more humane testing methods.

The Future

There are [many alternatives](#) to animal tests now in use by the cosmetics, personal care and other manufacturing interests. Some of these tests have been validated by the U.S. Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods, while others have been in use by industry for more than a decade. Major manufacturers of cosmetics and personal care items have already ceased testing on animals altogether, while others have substantially reduced their reliance on animal tests.